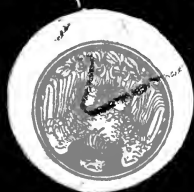


ECHOES OF THE PAST



~BY~

CLARA L. MCILVAIN

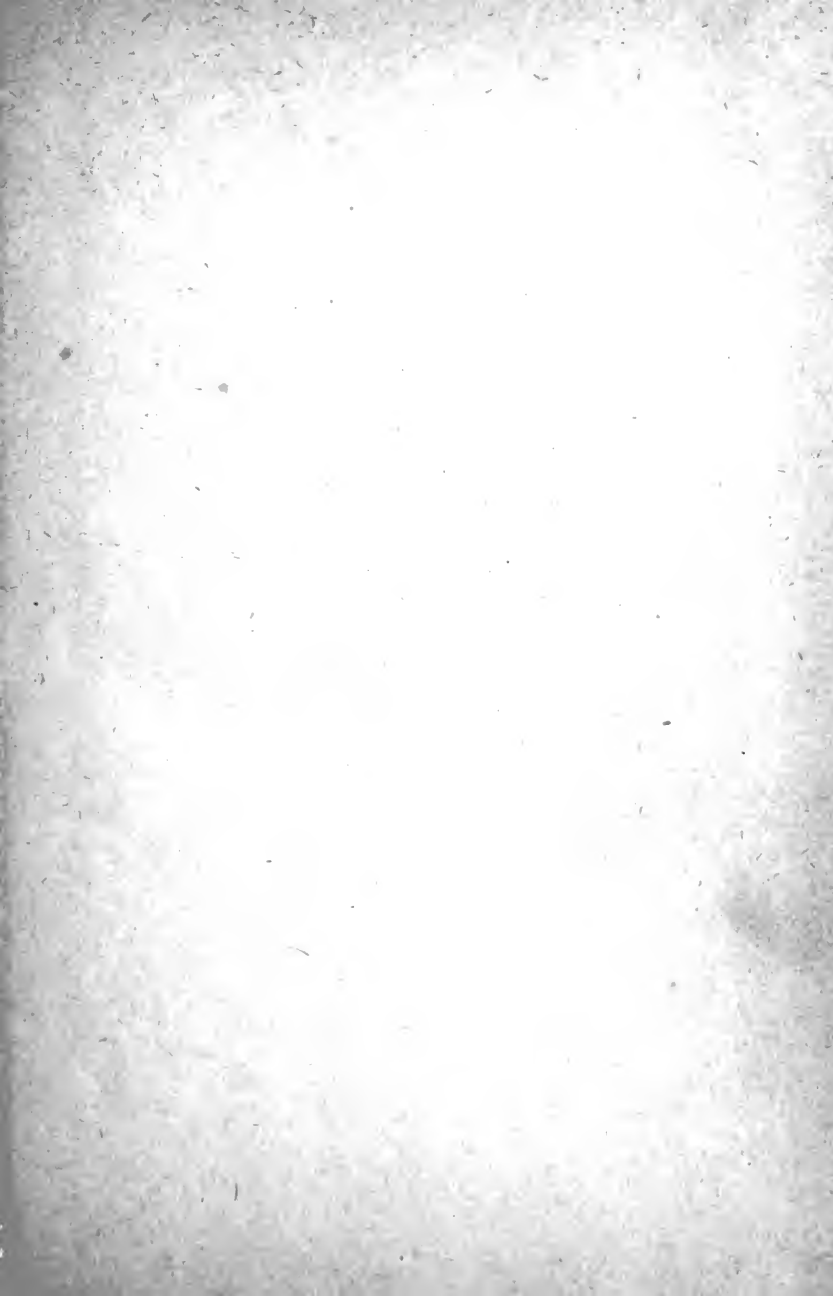
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ECHOES OF THE PAST:

Poems

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BY

MRS. CLARA L. ^{Lowell} McILVAIN.

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EDITED BY HER DAUGHTER,

LOTTIE McILVAIN MOORE.



PUBLISHERS:

JOHN P. MORTON AND COMPANY, LOUISVILLE, KY.

1890



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LOTTIE MCILVAIN MOORE.
1890

*WHEN the merry hues of autumn
Tinge forest, hill, and leafy grove,
When the sun in softened splendor
Sheds his radiance from above,
When the summer flowers are fading,
The little birds away have flown,
When the wildwood's only music
Is the wind's wailing monotone,
When like withered hopes the leaflets
All scattered 'round our path are cast,
Then I come to you, dear readers,
Only a waif upon the blast ;
And I come to you half quest'ning,
Will you welcome my lays again ?
Will the Echoes which I waken
Strike a chord in your heart's refrain ?
In my pages here are garnered
Many opening buds of thought,
Many sheaves of riper fancy
Which poet heart and pen hath fraught,
Blending facts and fairy fiction
With songs of life and songs of death,
Leaflets strewn along life's pathway
From out the Past an Echo's breath.*

To the Grandsons of the Author,
who so Frequently Formed a Theme for her Gifted Pen,
this Book is Dedicated by their Mother.

PREFACE.

IN presenting this collection of poems to the public, I feel that I am not only fulfilling the wishes of the author, but also those of many friends who have from time to time come to me with the request that I should edit my mother's poetry—left me as a sacred legacy at the close of a life of such sweet tranquillity and beauty that it could but fail to resolve itself in poesy.

It has been a melancholy pleasure to revel in these "Echoes of the Past," which wakened memories of happy days now vanished and brought again to mind sorrows which time had only dimmed.

While the work has been pleasant, it has not been altogether without labor, as many of the choicest poems were in pencil, written in my mother's latter years, during steadily failing health. These I found in a port-folio long laid aside.

Others had been gathered together in neat form by her own hand for me to use when I saw fit.

The selection from the numerous manuscripts in my possession has not been a question of weeks or months, but has occupied a part of my time for some years.

The harvest being ready, I have gathered the fruits into this volume, which I trust will not only prove acceptable to her friends but also to readers to whom the author was unknown.

LOTTIE MCILVAIN MOORE.

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Songs of Life.



THE BRIDAL.

STRAINS entrancing—witching music!—

Fill with melody the air;

Lights are flashing, flowers are breathing

Sweetest fragrance everywhere;

Garlands, culled from wood and garden,

Wreathe with Nature's grace the walls;

Lightsome footsteps, happy voices

Echo gayly thro' the halls.

Fair the scene—meet for the bridal—

Every heart responsive swells

To the chiming, merry chiming

Of the golden marriage bells.

Pure and lovely in the freshness

Of thy blushing maiden grace;

Veil enhancing, not concealing,

All the sweetness of thy face;

Orange buds and spotless lilies
Resting lightly on thy brow,
Where no past, no present sorrow
Casts its envious shadow now ;
Rarest lace and richest satin,
Pearls from ocean's deepest tide—
Thus we see thee, oh, our daughter !
In the vesture of a Bride !

Let the band of merry bridesmaids
On thy ling'ring footsteps wait ;
Let the Bridegroom pause a moment
As he enters at the gate ;
Let the guileless little children
'Mid the buds and blossoms stray,
Which their hands have culled to scatter,
Fitting emblems, on thy way.

Let them wait ! for in this hour
All the love comes surging back,
Which has, full and deep and changeless,
Flowed adown thy childhood's track ;
Let them wait ! the voice of Nature
Rises holy in its might—
All the Mother, *all* the Father,
Speak within our hearts to-night.

Bridal robes and orange blossoms
 Fade before us as we gaze,
Thou art once again the darling
 Of our early wedded days;
And a helpless babe we clasp thee
 Fondly, closely to our breast,
Kiss thy parted lips, watch o'er thee
 In thy dreamless cradled rest,

Guide thy trembling, tott'ring footsteps,
 Mark thy dawning girlish grace,
And *thy* life a line of gladness
 In our own lives seems to trace.
But time passes swiftly onward,
 And e'en now thy wand'ring feet
Ling'ring pause, but half reluctant,
 Where the Brook and River meet.

Laughing Brook! with naught but sunshine
 Mirrored in its crystal flow;
Mighty River! whose dark waters
 Tell not of the rocks below!
Pause and think, our child! our daughter!
 Ere thou tempt'st its treacherous tide,
All thou leavest—all thou plightest—
 When thou goest from us—a BRIDE.

All around thee still lies smiling
Childhood's sunny, flowery plain,
Soon to vanish in the distance,
And to come back—ne'er again!
And the voices with loud echo,
Through the vista of its years,
Ring with notes of joy and gladness,
Mingled not with sighs or tears,

And the love which e'er watched o'er thee,
Turning every thorn aside,
Leaving not a sweet untasted,
Leaving not a wish denied—
All this love, so deep and holy!
All this love, so tried and true!
Thou art leaving for another
Which is yet untried and new!

Wilt thou turn back? No; the woman
Speaks in all thy glowing face
With a power and a sweetness,
With a hallowed, lofty grace;
And we bless God, though we lose thee,
Precious darling of our life,
For the trusting love that fits thee
For the mission of—a WIFE!

This is not an empty pageant !

This is not an idle show !

And *thy* bridal has a meaning

Which mere worldings can not know ;

For, unseen by them, yet blessing

As the pure in heart are blest,

He is here, whom thou hast bidden—

Precious Savior, Cana's guest !

Let him enter then, the Bridegroom !

Into his hand we now place thine—

To his loving, tender keeping

Our life's treasure we resign ;

And may God and his bright angels,

Who are with us here to-night,

Bless him e'en as he proves faithful

To the vows he soon will plight.

Go thou forth with him—our daughter !

Be the sunshine of his life—

Jewel priced above the rubies—

Tender, true, and faithful WIFE !

Make his home a very Eden ;

Let the angels, Peace and Love,

Be its sleepless sentinels, and

Liken it to Heaven above.

Be his joy in hours of gladness ;
And when come—as come there will—
Weary days and sorrow-laden,
Be his joy, his comfort still ;
Show him that a lofty spirit
Dwelleth in that girlish form,
Reared to know but smiles and sunshine,
Yet undaunted in the storm !

Bid them come, the merry bridesmaids !
And the happy children too ;
Open, open wide the portals,
Let the bridal train pass through !
O'er a pathway strewn with flowers
Lightly tread their careless feet,
And their coming gladsome music,
Sweetest melody, doth greet ;

Till before the Lord's anointed,
Lowly, rev'rently they bend,
Plight the solemn vows that bind them
Heart to heart, till life shall end !
May God bless thee, oh, our daughter !
Bless the dear one at thy side !
Bless the love and pride that thrill him,
As he turns to greet his BRIDE !

And although some tears must glisten
As we turn to say "Farewell,"
Deem them not all drops of sorrow ;
Know we thou hast chosen well :
And the light of hope shines through them ,
Making rainbows fair and bright ,
Arching o'er the untried future
Which thou enterest to-night.



CHRISTMAS.

'TIS midnight, and as one entranced I gaze
Upon the stars that gem the azure maze
Above us, God's own jewels, one by one
His hand that set them, when the day is done,
To flash and sparkle in the silvery light
That ushers in the radiant Queen of Night.

Stars!—the same that sang the joyful hymn
Of the creation; that grew pale and dim
Above the angry deluge; still the same
That lit the angel feet that went and came
To Jacob in his dream; that looked with awe
On Sinai when God thundered forth his law.

The same! But here my very soul is bowed
In reverence and love; and as a cloud,
A sunset cloud, the glowing Present fades,
The Past emerges from the phantom shades:
A vision dawns upon my wondering eyes—
Judea's spreading plain before me lies,

And 'neath its palms the patient shepherds keep.
Methinks, the midnight watch above their sheep.
The stars in all their jeweled splendor shine ;
The moon sends down in many a silvery line
Her full-orbed radiance. Save the sound
Of far-off fountains, stillness reigns profound.

But lo ! a flood of living, golden light
Illumes the skies, but now so calmly bright,
And music ! Heavenly music, such as ne'er
Had tranced with melody the mortal ear,
Fills the still midnight ! Prone upon the ground
The shepherds fall in rev'rence at the sound.

“Glory to God !” the angel choirs proclaim,
And “Peace on Earth” to those who fear his name.
Bid man rejoice ! this night has ushered in
The sinless Savior of a world of sin !
This night the myriad hosts of Heaven have smiled,
For Christ is born and God is reconciled !

And these stars are the same that shone
On that first glorious Christmas, and anon,
With steadfast ray, the Magi passed before,
To guide their footsteps, lead them to adore.
The same eternal stars ! though ages in their train
Have come and gone, and Christmas dawns again.

Christmas! but not in Judea. Fair and white
The earth lies sparkling in the still moonlight,
Begemmed and clad in spotless garments, meet
The royal Babe of Bethlehem to greet,
While leafless forests sigh a soft refrain
Caught from that sweet angelic strain.

Christmas! How through the vistas long and dim
Of vanished years our Life's first morning hymn
Comes swelling back! Days when we wished and smiled
And hoped with all the untaught ardor of a child
Are with us, till we seem to quaff once more
The pure unmingled halcyon draught of yore.

We smile, and then we sigh, for ah! between
The Now and Then what sorrows intervene!
What narrow mounds before us rise to-day,
The spectral milestones of Life's onward way:
There lie the hopes—the cherished friends of yore—
And they shall come to us on earth no more.

And yet 't is "Merry Christmas" all the same.
It is the day the infant Savior came;
The day the Angel choirs in triumph sang
Their song of peace, whose mighty echo rang
From Heaven to Earth. God bids each heart rejoice:
You sorrowful! will you not hear his voice?

His outstretched hand bids human passions cease ;
Enter his Temple ; taste his blessed Peace !
If earth looks dark, creep closer unto Him,
He brings you joys that fade not or grow dim ;
Cast off your fetters, let your spirit rise
E'en to the glorious vision of the skies.



THE PAST, THE PRESENT, AND THE FUTURE.

HURRAH, boys! hurrah! cried a rosy cheeked boy,
While his dark flashing eye sparkled brighter with joy,
And the proud curl of triumph was on his young lip;
That boy, proud artist, had launched his first ship.
'T was a beautiful stream, a clear running brook,
And flow'rets peeped out from each soft, grassy nook;
The sun too was shining so brightly on high,
Not a cloud came to darken the beautiful sky;
And the birds were all singing—but, absorbed in his toy,
He thought not of these, happy, innocent boy!
On the morrow we came, but all battered and torn
Lay the ship *then* so pretty, but *now* so forlorn;
And the artist of yesterday wandered to-day
'Mid the birds and flowerets, as heedless as they—
The remains of the Past all around thee may be,
But the Present, fair childhood, the Present for thee!

When the soft winds of summer are whispering 'round,
And the leaves bend to list to the murmuring sound,
On the shore of a river, whose deep, silent flow,
Thus ever, unresting, right onward must go,
Is a youth, with the shadow of thought on his brow,
If a shade we can call what such brightness brings now.

'T is true, he has changed, but the eye and the lip
Betray the young artist, the lord of the ship.
The grass, the fair flowerets that spangle the shore
Are unheeded as those by the brookside of yore.
The birdlings' sweet songs, as uncared for are here,
As those that in childhood once greeted his ear,
But no ship charms him now, nor the green forest nigh,
Not here—on the distance he is turning his eye.
Oh! what is the Present, fond dreamer, to thee!
The Future, gay youth, ah! the Future for thee!

The chill winds of winter so bleak and so drear
Are singing the dirge of the weary old year,
And the snow weaves his shroud on the wide-spreading plain,
And our brooklet is bound by a stern, icy chain.
All unheeding the blast, comes an old man once more
To revisit the haunts that he cherished of yore.
Time has silvered his locks and has furrowed his brow,
But you gaze on the boy—the gay dreamer now.
See! his eye lights once more—there's a smile on his lip—
He is thinking, perhaps, when he launched his first ship.
Now the smile fades away, the old man bows his head
In mem'ry of hopes long since withered and dead.
And thus, when the Present no more shalt thou prize,
When the Future's bright rainbow shall fade from thine eyes,
And thy heart all entombed with thy treasures must be,
Then the Past, hoary age, still shall blossom for thee.

THE LITTLE GOLD HEAD AND THE BROWN.

WHERE are they pillowed to-night,
“The little gold head and the brown?”
Far from my dim, longing sight,
Nestling all cosily down,
Dreaming sweet dreams of delight—
Far are they pillowed to-night,
“The little gold head and the brown!”

God bless each dear little head—
“The little gold head and the brown!”
Angel-wings over them spread;
Monarchs may boast of their crown,
Earth may her jewels outspread—
I have for treasures instead
“The little gold head and the brown!”

Sweetly and calmly they sleep,
“The little gold head and the brown!”
Heedless of tears they must weep,
Heedless of skies that must frown,
Tares with the grain they must reap;
Woes all our love can not keep
From “the little gold head and the brown.”

Ah, yes! the future may hold,
For "the little gold head and the brown,"
Temptations, dangers untold,
Skies that may lower and frown;
Fortune and friends may turn cold,
Grief in its shadows enfold
"The little gold head and the brown!"

Shield them, dear Lord, we pray,
"The little gold head and the brown!"
Keep them from going astray;
Let them not faint nor fall down,
horny and rough though the way,
Lead them through night unto day,
"The little gold head and the brown!"

And when, all silvered at last,
No more "the gold head and the brown!"
Life and its sorrows are past,
Oh then! an unfading crown
For the cross they have borne and held fast,
Which now at thy feet they will cast,
Give to "the gold head and the brown."

THE BAND OF SEVEN.

SEE, a band of youthful maidens
Pausing with reluctant feet
By the swiftly rushing waters
Where the brook and river meet;
Roses bloom upon their faces,
Roses deck their sunny hair,
And the glory of life's morning
Rests upon each forehead bare.

And the goal for which they've striven
They have reached; but ah! its brightness
Now seems strangely dimmed by tears,

* * * * *

For not lightly may be severed
Golden bonds by friendship riven,
And they linger o'er the parting,
This gay, careless band of seven.

But there speaks a lovely maiden,
Through her rainbow smiles and tears,
"Why cast we this mist of sorrow
O'er our happy coming years?"

In this world of change and changes
Sure *some* constant hearts are given;
Come what may, unto each other
We'll be true—we still are seven.

“At the altar”—and a soft smile
Glowed upon her blooming cheek—
“We will stand by each companion,
List the vows 't is hers to speak;
And alas!”—but here she faltered
As she dashed away a tear—
“If one be called to leave us,
We will mourn beside her bier.

“And the early called and chosen
Shall the Guardian Angels be
To those who still must journey
To the bright eternity.”

* * * * *

WEDDING BELLS.

WEDDING bells! Wedding bells!
How their merry, silvery chime
Seems to tell of naught but gladness;
How it wakens into rhyme
All that's fairest, all that's brightest,
All that's tend'rest, all that's best,
All that's dearest, all that's truest,
In the heart within our breast!

Wedding bells! Wedding bells!
What a soft and rosy haze,
What a rainbow-tinted glamour
Cast they o'er our coming days!
Life seems all one summer garden—
Endless bloom without decay,
Grief and care but empty shadows
That a breath can trace away.

Wedding bells! Wedding bells!

Oh! how broad the path appears,
Flower-crowned and bright with sunshine,
Down the mystic vale of years!
And the thorns amid the roses,
And the rocks we fain must meet,
Know no terrors and detain not
Our unwearied, untried feet.

Wedding bells! Wedding bells!

Must their echoes die away?
Must the clamor and the tumult
Of life's still advancing day
Drown the sweetness and the music
Of their distant, gladsome chime,
Break the charm and pierce the brightness
Of our early morning time?

Must the slowly dawning wisdom
Of the ever-passing years
Bring to eyes unknown to weeping
Dreary shadows, bitter tears,
As we catch the saddened cadence
As it rises, as it swells,
That is mingled with the chiming
Of the bells—the wedding bells?

Wedding bells! Wedding bells!
Is there nothing that survives
Of the beauty and the freshness
Of the morning of our lives,
Nothing that, when youth has left us,
And our heads are bowed and gray,
We can claim of all the brightness
That shone o'er our bridal day?

Ah! we know our steps shall falter,
And our sparkling eyes grow dim,
Hope shall fade, and Death shall gather
Many dear ones unto him;
But within our hearts, perennial
In its beauty, ever dwells
Love, the changeless, the immortal,
Of the bells—the wedding bells!

Love! the burden and the cadence
Of their ever joyous strain,
Sometimes faint; but in its fullness
Do we catch the sweet refrain
When, the tumult and the striving
Of life's noon-day conflict past,
Battle-scarred, we turn our faces
To the evening shades at last?

Wedding bells! ah, then, all golden
Shall the mighty touch of Time
Wake the ever-growing brightness
Of their chime—their silvery chime,
Golden with the fair effulgence
Of that holy, Heavenly place,
Where in all his dazzling glory
We shall see God “face to face.”



LIFE.

'T WAS morning: o'er a vale of flowers
Arose the sun, his golden beam
Kindling with light the fairy bowers
That made the beauteous landscape seem
As if the Savior's kindling smile
Were resting on the spot the while.

A silvery stream the lovely vale
Filled with its music soft and low,
While moved a bark with swelling sail
Most gently to its water's flow,
And calmly on its course did glide,
Sweet zephyrs whisp'ring at its side.

Within a rosy infant played,
On whose bright face dwelt smiles so fair,
It seemed as golden beams had strayed
From Heaven, their home, to linger there.
But played the baby not alone—
An angel's wing was 'round it thrown.

Time passed : still on the slight bark flies,
A graceful youth now marks its tide ;
Some ripples on the stream arise,
But hovers near the angel guide,
And points the boy with longing eyes
To towers that gleam in far-off skies.

Noon comes, but oh ! a low'ring cloud
The smiling sky has overcast—
It bursts—now roars the tempest loud,
The lightning fiercely glimmers past,
And on the storm-tossed vessel stands
A weary man with outstretched hands.

In vain to steer his bark he tries ;
A long and dreary rock-bound coast
Is all that meets his anxious eyes,
And should he strike that he were lost.
At length he prays, the dark clouds fly,
Again his angel hovers nigh.

'T is evening, and the setting sun
Is sending down his parting beam,
His kindly course is nearly run,
And in the calmly flowing stream
Descend his bright rays one by one.
An aged man now fills the bark,
Who scarce his onward course can mark.

His angel points with outstretched hand

Whence seraph music gushing seems—

Such as oft played an angel band

In dreams, his happy childhood dreams.

Gained is the port—hushed human strife—

That port is Heaven—the voyage, Life.



WEIGHING THE BABY.

YES! bring in the scales: weigh the dear little man—
Such a one ne'er was born since creation began!

Take care! line the basket with pillow of down,
And cover him well from his heel to his crown.
Our baby, our darling, our well-spring of joy;
The world never saw such a wonderful boy!

Hold him steady, Papa, and let dear Mamma see;
And Grandpa and Grandma, come count—one--two--three—
Four—five—six—and seven—and eight—and—yes!—nine!
Nine pounds: are you sure? look! the figures are fine.
Nine pounds weighs our dear little manny all told,
And every ounce dearer than jewels or gold.

There now! it is over: his dear little head
Burrows cosy and warm by Mamma in the bed:
See his tiny pink ears and his cunning pink toes,
And his sweet rose-bud mouth, and his cute little nose.
Oh, the love he has wakened—our dear baby boy!—
God-given and holy, time can not destroy.

But, e'en as we gaze on his slumbering face,
The shade of the future sweeps over its grace :
For we know that our darling the cold world must weigh—
Not tenderly, proudly, as we did to-day ;
It will spread for his weakness no cushion of down,
No mantle his frailties to cover or crown ;

Nor e'en will its standard be lofty and true ;
Success is its touchstone of merit : and who
Would fain win its smiles, but too often must learn
To flatter what most he should scorn, loathe, and spurn.
God grant—oh, our boy !—it must not be thine
Thus to bow and to cringe at an unhallowed shrine.

May he keep thee from danger, temptation, and sin ;
Make thee lovely without, but more lovely within ;
For yet one time must our darling be weighed
By scales hands Almighty have fashioned and made ;
And as they are balanced his future will show
An infinite bliss or a limitless woe !

But when he came down from God's beautiful throne
To be "our" dear boy, he came not alone.
God sent a bright angel to point him the way,
And he will watch o'er him by night and by day,
Turn the thorns from his path, and, Life's pilgrimage past,
God shall weigh him, and find him "not wanting" at last.

FOUR GENERATIONS.

FOUR generations! Life's oft changing phase,
From rosy dawn to evening's twilight haze—
Alpha, Omega—man's epitome! one ray
Of passing sunshine shall for us portray.
The Infant living in the Present, while
His youthful parents gazing on him smile,
With fair dreams of the Future far away,
Whose rainbow arch is spanning o'er to-day;
Their parents, o'er whose hopes and dreams the Past
Its mingled bitter-sweet begins to cast;
And then, again, their parents' parents, who
Full many a weary mile have journeyed through,
Whose youthful picturings have paled before
The nameless glories of the unseen shore.
The Present scarce is theirs; "*they*" claim the Past,
And to their vision is made clear at last
The love that sent each joy and grief aright,
And thank God for the "*even-time of light!*"

LINES.

MY life is like a troubled stream,
A faded flower, a gloomy dream,
A tomb upon whose marble white
The sun may shine, yet fail to light;
Or like a harp whose wailing tone
But speaks of joys forever flown,
Or like the dying ember's light,
Sad relic of what once was bright;
Some ivied ruin dim and gray,
Left silent, crumbling to decay,
Or some bright hope—too bright to last—
Come but to tell us it is past,
Or like meteor's flash o'er sky,
Which brightens radiant but to die.

CHRIST IS RISEN.

“CHRIST is risen !” Swell the tidings,
Even to the far off skies,
Joyful tidings, “ Christ is risen ”
That we too with Him may rise ;

Rise with *Him*, from death and darkness,
Strife and weariness and gloom,
Unto light and life eternal,
Fadeless beauty, changeless bloom.

Oh the bliss, the nameless rapture !
Unto us it is not given
To conceive ! Ah, who can picture
Our first Easter morn in Heaven !

Risen ! free and freed forever
From our load of care and sin,
Come unto the gates of Heaven,
Opened wide to let us in.

Safe across the troubled waters,
Where storms come not, tempests cease,
Life's unrest and fev'rish longing
Stilled at last in endless peace.

Oh, my friends! doth not earth's journey
Oft seem weary, tho' our God,
Prince and Savior hath before us
Lovingly the pathway trod?

Doth not e'en the sun shine darkly,
And the skies look gray and cold,
Till we cry out, "Save, we perish!"
Ere life's mile-stones half are told?

But when thickest, darkest 'round us
Press the shadows and the gloom,
Thoughts of that bright Easter morning
Come like light upon a tomb.

Easter! Easter—blessed Easter!
Resurrection and the life,
Glorious God-like compensation
Of our struggles and our strife.

E'en the earth springs forth to greet thee,
Verdure-clad and crowned with flowers,
Casting off the icy fetters
Which have bound her wintry hours.

And we too will bid thee welcome,
 Hope and love and holy faith
In our hearts anew shall blossom,
 Make us faithful unto death ;

From earth's doubtings and defilements
 Make us pure and strong to rise,
Fitted by our earthly Easter
 For the Easter of the skies.



WHAT WILL ITS DESTINY BE?

SLEEPING sweetly, calmly, on its young mother's breast
Lay a dear little babe, in its innocence blest.

Its golden curls played o'er its forehead so fair,
As though sunbeams in brightness were lingering there,
And the rose's pale blush on its cheek glowed the while,
And its sweet cherub lips seemed to part with a smile.
The mother's dark eye spoke of volumes of love,
As she gazed on the treasure just lent from above,
And she murmured, "My darling! oh, may thy young heart
E'er be sinless as thou in thine infancy art."

Love watched o'er its sleep, but I sighed, as I thought
On the future, all dim, with uncertainty fraught;
And I whispered, "Life dawns all in brightness for thee,
But what, smiling babe, will thy destiny be?"

Must the light pass away from that pure, sinless brow,—
Oh! must clouds lower dark where the sunbeams rest now;
Must the bright color fade 'neath the pressure of care,
And yield to the lusterless hues of despair?

Shalt thou too, bright vision of Heavenly birth,
Learn that sorrows must dim the joys of this earth—
That the things we most cherish the soonest decay,
And that e'en while we gaze they are passing away;?
Oh! shall it be thine disappointment to drain,
To toil on for this, and to toil on in vain;
To love and to know, ere the night watch is o'er,
Thy loved one will pass to Eternity's shore;
That the stars that beam now from heaven's blue wave,
To-morrow will shine on a newly made grave?

We know not—the future is dark to our eyes;
Only deep love we know in thy mother's heart lies—
'T is thy talisman now; and oh! had it the power
To change into sunlight thy life's darkened hour,
Not one grief should be thine, not one sorrow, one tear,
But all bright as thine infancy's dreamings appear.
Yet there's One keepeth guard, with His angels o'er thee,
And He knoweth alone what thy destiny'll be.



SNOW.

IT is snowing! it is snowing!
Cried my little one in glee;
It is snowing, softly snowing,
Oh, dear mother, come and see!

So I hied me to the window
Where my little darling stood,
And looked out upon the snowflakes
In a quiet, dreamy mood.

Very pure and white before us
Stretched the now deserted street,
With its fair snow yet untrodden
By man's busy, way-worn feet.

And I sighed, that on the morrow
It would spotless be no more;
Busy life must leave its traces,
As it e'er has done before.

Oh! what foot-prints, many foot-prints,
Would the coming morning show
On the yet unsullied surface
Of the snow, the spotless snow!

Here the light and careless foot-prints
Of the merry-hearted boy,
Bounding o'er the welcome snowdrift
In his free, unclouded joy ;

There the plodding step of labor,
Here the firm and manly tread,
And the lingering, trembling foot-prints
Of the old whose youth has fled ;

Here we trace the aimless wanderings
Of the houseless poor by night ;
There Crime's lurking, stealthy foot-prints
Dim the snow's unbroken white.

Oh ! the foot-prints, many foot-prints,
That the coming morn will show,
What a varied tale they tell us,
Foot-prints on the fallen snow !

Then I turned me to my darling,
And methought she 's like the snow,
Pure and spotless sent from Heaven
To this weary world below ;

On the yet unwritten tablets
Of her inner heart and mind
Not a shadow, not a blemish,
Not a stain of earth we find.

Yet e'en here life's weary lessons
Must be written and effaced,
Hoary Time's relentless way-marks
By his iron finger traced.

Earthly shadows must fall darkly
On the yet unclouded way ;
Earthly sorrows, earthly passions
Dim the sunshine of to-day.

Pure from God have I received her ;
Must her little cheek grow pale ?
Must her soft brown hair be silvered,
Must her airy foot-step fail ?

Must she rear her youthful idols,
Must she bow to them and trust
But to see them with the evening
Fall and crumble into dust ?

Yes! but human life is fleeting
And our home is not below ;
Whence man cometh he returneth,
Like the snow, the fallen snow.

With the first warm breath of summer
Shall the snow-drift pass away,
Gently drawn from earth to heaven
By the sun's absorbing ray.

'TIS NIGHT, DARLING HUSBAND.

'TIS night, darling husband,
And night far from thee ;
The young moon is crowning
With silver each tree,
And the bright stars unwearied
Look out from above
Like faithful friends keeping
Their vigil of love.

The streamlet and zephyr
Are hushed into rest,
The birdling has flown to
Its soft mossy nest.
All buried in slumber
The earth seems to be ;
But 't is night, darling husband,
And night far from thee.

Yet brings not this hour
Its balm to my heart,
The shadows that gather
There will not depart;
My spirit is yearning
Thy dear face to see—
But 't is night, darling husband,
And night far from thee.

As I look through the gloaming
Of years that have flown
Since first at the altar
Thou calledst me thine own,
At thy side I am longing,
Ay, longing to be—
But 't is night, darling husband,
And night far from thee.



THE ONE TRUE CHURCH.

'T WAS evening, and as in a dream I stood
Musing on life—its evil and its good—
How man, created for the glorious skies,
Barter his kingdom for earth's vanities;
How crime, unchecked, unblushing holds its sway
And flaunts its banners in the open day,
And how the fiercest passions burn and rage
And blight the glory of the present age—
And raising up mine eyes to heaven, I cried:
"O Lord, for this poor world Thy Son hath died!
Yield it not up to sin and crime and woe,
Send us some heaven-taught messenger below,
Whose lips will drop with eloquence to win
The wretched sinner from his life of sin;
The sophist, who spends life and health and youth
In solving errors to the light of truth—
The worlding, from his painted, gilded ease,
To labor for the rest that never flees—

One who can shed a light upon the gloom
That wraps the aged hast'ning to the tomb,
And in the promise of our youthful day
Tinge with the brightness of a heavenly ray.
Error engulfs us as a surging flood,
Where is the preacher of Christ's Sacred Blood?"
But ere I paused a voice, though stern, yet mild,
Low answering, said: "Where is thy faith, O child?
Evil can not prevail o'er good. The search
Shall be rewarded in the One True Church."
Rebuked, I turned with reverend step and slow,
Nor paused until the solemn organ's flow
Of sacred music, dedicate to Him,
Swelled the broad aisles of His Cathedral dim.
Prostrate before the holy altar here
I bowed, nor rose until upon my ear
Fell words so beautiful that I would fain
Have deemed them echoes of some heavenly strain;
And, looking up, I saw a form so young,
So frail, it seemed there yet around it clung
The halo baptized infancy must know
Ere yet it stains its robes of spotless snow.
Again I listened, and words so plain and real
That all who heard must understand and feel;
He spake truths that did seem to fall
Of their own weight into the hearts of all;
Forgetting self, he only seemed to span

The bridge, the gulf that yawns 'twixt God and man.
Old men were there, who bowed their silver'd heads,
And rev'rent whispered, "Sacred ground he treads;"
Great men and learned, yielding as they heard
Unbidden homage to God's holy word;
Young men and maidens, human blossoms fair,
Yielding to God their morning fragrance there;
Children, whose reason scarce had dawned above,
Sunning their hearts and feeling "God is love."
He ceased! O'er all a solemn silence fell;
And as again the organ's mighty swell
Stole through the aisles, its cadence seemed to rise
And fall with melody caught from the skies.
As God draws near, earth fades like mist away,
Her brightness pales beneath *His* perfect ray,
And as the Sacred Heart is raised on high,
Its blessings flow in answer to His sigh.
"I thank thee, gracious Lord," I cried, "my search
Has not been vain within *Thy One True Church!*"

CHILDHOOD.

OH, happy childhood! come again
With all thy fleeting joy and pain,
When in our path some new-born flower
Sprang up with every passing hour,
And every breeze that fluttered by
Breathed joy athwart the sunlit sky.

The sun still ushers in the day,
The moon sends down her silv'ry ray;
Yet all their light seems dimmed with tears,
They beam not as in childhood years;
They seem but mem'ries of the Past,
Bright, but alas! too bright to last.

Spring still the earth adorns with flowers,
With verdure clothes the forest bowers;
The brook its murmurings as of yore
Breathes softly to the pebbly shore;
A thousand charms the fields enfold,
Yet wear they not the tints of old.

And thou must never more return,
Earth's stern, sad lessons all must learn;
Yet when the breaking heart is bowed
By sorrow, through the low'ring cloud
Will burst, and softened radiance cast
Around us, mem'ries of the past.



SUNSHINE IN A SHADY PLACE.

MY darling, you have brought your book,
And wish that I should trace
Some lines upon its virgin page,
Its spotlessness to grace.

One moment brief you lingering stood
Just here beside my chair—
The sunshine through the windows stole
And nestled in your hair ;

The radiance of life's morning time
Enwrapping you in light, * * *
How fair methought, art thou, O youth !
How glorious, how bright !

Spring's roses blush upon your cheek,
And in your smiling face,
The reflex of your happy heart
It makes mine light to trace.

'T was in a book the other day
I found a thought so true—
So sweet—that I will dare my dear
To borrow it for you.

Though writ long years ago, 't is meet
E'en this fair page to grace,
These are the words, "A sunshine in"
(Mark now) "a shady place."

The thought came o'er me as you stood
Just now beside my chair,
That though the place was dark before
You made a sunshine there.

Thus should a woman ever prove,
And thus, my child, may you
Through all life's changes ever be
To woman's mission true ;

For life has many a shady place,
As one and all must learn ;
Its vistas dim, as smiling youth,
Fly never to return.

To turn its shadows into light,
Its meaner dross to gold,
Such is the wonderous alchemy
That woman's touch should hold.

Be yours, my child, this precious gift,
Be yours this magic art,
To shed around you ev'rywhere
The sunshine of the heart.

The heart so guileless and so free,
So spotless and so pure,
That gilding e'en the darkest clouds
Its sunshine shall endure,

Undimmed by age, undimmed by care,
Till it is called to grace
That world by God's own sunshine filled,
That knows no "shady place."



THE GOLDEN WEDDING DAY.

FIFTY years! Oh! for the tongue, the pen,
The glowing pen of Seraph, to portray
The varied cycles 'twixt the *now* and *then*—

The snows of Winter and the buds of May!
Fifty years! along whose path are strewn
The cold, dead ashes of departed joy;
Hope's withered buds, and many a mural stone
Sacred to love—Time, failing to destroy,
And envious of the sweetness that it gave,
Has made a hallowed mem'ry and—a grave!

For all lives must know changes. Spring must pass
And yield to Summer and her flow'ry train,
And Autumn's gold must fall upon the grass,
And Winter's fetters bind with icy chain;
Not less—the rosy-tinted, glowing morn
Must deepen into noon, and noon in turn
Pale, as the evening cometh to adorn
The skies with all her thousand lights, that burn
With steadfast radiance till the sun's bright ray
Once more shall usher in a new-born day.

But holding over all a magic power,
Bright'ning the shadows e'er they found a place,
Lighting the darkest clouds when tempests lower,
Smoothing the deepest furrows time can trace,
Gladd'ning with blossoms e'en the bleakest plain,
Filling with beauty all—below—above!
God sends a messenger earth's ills in vain
May strive to conquer, Love!—immortal love!
Ever undimmed its two-fold blessings shine,
Love that is human—Love that is divine!

This Love, dear parents, e'er has watched *your* way,
Has journeyed with you fifty changeeful years,
And brought you to your *Golden Wedding* day .
Through smiling paths, though not unknown to tears.
This twofold Love! which gives the furrowed cheek
The silvered hair, the trembling step and slow,
A dearer, sweeter eloquence to speak
Than youth's fair charms of fifty years ago!
Tried in the furnace! old, and yet not old,
Each link refined, of purest virgin gold.

It stood beside you in the long ago,
That far-off Summer's fresh and vernal prime,
When at God's altar, fervently and low,
You pledged the troth that neither death nor Time

Hath power to break ; and as your untried feet
Pursued life's onward journey, at your side
It lingered still, made every labor sweet,
Your staff, support, your comfort and your guide ;
Till, looking backward through life's busy maze,
Present and Past lie in one golden haze.

On—ever onward—your advancing way,
Leaving the meadows and the flow'ry glades,
Up rugged steeps, thorn-strewn and rocky, lay ;
And low'ring storm clouds cast their lurid shades
Where bluest skies had smiled. Weary and worn,
But hand in hand, and *one* in heart and will,
No care, no grief too great—*together* borne—
That heavenly Messenger was with you still,
Temp'ring the blast, the chilling blight, the cold,
And, won'drous alch'my ! turning all to gold !

And children 'rose to call you blessed. Sons,
In whose young features wifely love could trace
Their Father's image. Daughters, gentle ones,
In whom might live again their Mother's grace,
When age had dimmed its freshness. Near—most near
To heart and soul—these blossoms of your life ;
But oh ! that other love—how far more dear !
That sacred love of Husband and of Wife !
Still yours, thank God ! though fifty years have told
From off Life's rosary their beads of gold.

And now the shadows lengthen to the west;
Life's steep ascent is o'er. The downward side
In tranquil beauty to the Vale of Rest
Slopes goldenly, e'en as the Summer tide
Glassing a sunset. Children gather 'round,
And children's children: every spirit bowed
With rev'rent thankfulness, e'en to the ground,
To Him whose mighty love, through storm and cloud,
For fifty years has smiled upon your way,
And blesses now your "GOLDEN WEDDING DAY!"



Poems of Fancy.



I WILL RETURN AT EASTER TIDE.

A LEGEND.

I

IN those grim old days lived a Baron,
Stern and stately and gloomy was he,
And he dwelt in his own feudal castle

Whose battlements looked to the sea.
No wife had this lonely old Baron :

The beautiful, gentle young bride
He had brought one fair morn to his castle
Soon withered and faded and died.

One *daughter* alone did she bear him—

He had longed for an HEIR to his race ;
And although she lay dying before him

He cursed her pale pitiful face,
And swore that the poor wailing infant

Was meet but to cast in the sea,
Till they hurried the child from his presence,
So wrathful and angry was he.

Then spoke the poor heart-broken mother,
 “ The paths of the world I have trod ;
I would not my daughter should tread them,
 Oh ! pray let me give her to God !
“ Men are cruel ; oh ! promise me, sire,
 No man you will ask her to wed ;
Let me think that the peace of the cloister
 Will be her's when her mother is dead.”
“ So be it ; I care not. G— curse her.”
 “ You promise ! ” the young mother cried ;
“ God bless her ! ” and tenderly smiling
 She turned on her pillow and died.
Years had passed, and the pitiless Baron
 Still dwelt in his castle alone ;
While within the calm shades of the convent
 The babe to a maiden had grown,
So fair and so wondrously lovely
 ’T was Heaven to look on her face ;
So spotless, no shadow of evil
 Had dimmed her first baptismal grace.
Mid the lily and rose of the garden
 She wandered the fairest of all ;
Awoke at the chime of the Matins
 And knelt at the Angelus’ call.
Not a nun, e’en the gravest, but loved her,
 And yet on her stern father’s face

Had she looked not since that dreary morning
He had cursed her, the last of his race.
Christ like had her guardians taught her
To mingle his name with her prayer,
But she breathed it alone at the altar,
And even the echo died there.
And now it was Yule tide: at Easter
The maiden her first vows would plight,
And the thought in her soul woke a rapture
That filled her whole being with light.
She was decking the shrine of Our Lady
When a nun, with afright ashen gray,
The dread summons brought, "Child, your sire
Has come, and would take you away!"
In vain were the prayers of the maiden
And useless and vain were her tears,
And vain were the nun's gentle pleadings
For the child they had cherished these years.
Then up from her knees rose the maiden,
And she said as all firmly she trod:
"Farewell! I will come back at Easter;
You know I am promised to God."
Then giving her hand to her sire,
Glanced upward one moment to pray,
And mounting the palfrey that waited,
The next she was off and away.

Soon the walls of the dreary old castle
 Frowned down from its lone sea-girt height,
And the twain silent rode in the court-yard
 In the shade of the gathering night;
For no word the young maiden had spoken
 Since her sire had scoffed at her prayer,
And she sat proud and pale in the moonlight,
 And he saw she was wondrously fair.
“By my soul!” quoth he, “fortune has granted
 To the bantling a beautiful face,
And she carries her honors right proudly,
 As beseemeth the last of my race.”
Days passed, and the poor lonely maiden
 Pined and grieved in the lordly halls,
And sighed for the peaceful contentment
 And calm of the convent walls.
Silks and jewels lay scattered around her,
 Rare perfumes were breathed on the air,
But how could earth’s glories and splendors
 With the riches of heaven compare!
At length one fell eve came her sire,
 “Arouse thee, child, rouse thee, I have guests;
Don thy jewels, thy silks and thy laces,
 It behooves thee to heed my behests.”
And the maiden, all shrinking and trembling,
 In silence the summons obeyed;

But ne'er at the head of a wassail
Sat so cold or so haughty a maid.
Yet there was a guest at the banquet,
A Prince in his own native land,
By her beauty and grace so enchanted
That he asked of her sire her hand.

II

Once more then the fair maiden pleaded
Where she thought to plead never again,
Once more were her sighs and her anguish
And her prayers and her tears all in vain.
Then she said: "My sire, I *will* not.
My mother lies under the sod,
And you know that dying she pledged me,
Most solemnly pledged me to God!"
Fearful then was the wrath of the Baron,
And fearful the oath that he swore,
'If you pass not a bride o'er this threshold,
You shall cross it alive *nevermore!*'
Days lapsed into months, and the maiden
Still sat in her lone sea-girt tower,

But no promise or threat of the Baron
 Could bring her to yield to his power ;
And the stern icy fetters of winter
 Had unclasped at the warm breath of spring,
And flowers were sprinkling the green sod
 And birds were beginning to sing,
But no flush to the cheek of the maiden
 The soft balmy breezes had brought,
And her beautiful eyes knew a brightness
 From no earthly radiance caught.
Her roses had long ago faded,
 A crushed, broken lily she lay ;
And as she grew fainter and fainter
 She felt she was passing away,
And longingly waited the summons,
 For although short the way she had trod,
She was weary and yearned to be taken
 To rest in the bosom of God.
One night, 't was the night before Easter,
 The Easter she 'd sighed for so long,
As she lay all alone in the darkness
 And prayed to be patient and strong—
All at once strains of angelic music
 Burst forth on the stillness of night,
And a flood of ineffable radiance
 Illumed the chamber with light,

And clad all in dazzling white garments,
A lily branch clasped in her hand,
And wearing a crown on her forehead,
A form at her bedside did stand.
“Dear child,” softly whispered the vision,
“So patiently bearing the rod,
The prayer of your soul has been answered,
And Easter shall give you to God.”
Morn came : cold and still lay the maiden,
All peacefully, calmly at rest,
A smile ling’ring o’er the pale features,
Her hands meekly crossed on her breast,
While hov’ring close over her pillow
Sat a fair dove all spotless and white ;
The awe struck and trembling attendants
Called their master in dire affright.
Ah ! stony the heart of the Baron
And evil the years he had passed,
But there in that still, silent presence
Remorse seized upon him at last.
“Bear her back to the cloister,” he ordered ;
And slowly they wended their way
Down the steep, rugged hills to the valley
Where the Convent so peacefully lay.
The vesper-bell sweetly was chiming,
The evening star shone in the west ;

It was well, *she had come back at Easter,*
Had come back forever to rest.
But, oh ! from that day was the Baron
A wanderer over the earth,
And closed was his ancestral castle,
Deserted the halls of his birth.
But oft with shadows of evening
The beautiful dove might be seen,
Hov'ring over the high latticed casement
Which the maiden's long prison had been ;
And though years have passed, and the castle
Is moss grown and gone to decay,
The dove is still seen in the twilight
By the traveler passing that way.



A REVERIE.

IT was a calm and holy hour,
A scene of beauty rare and bright;
The sun still lingered round each flower,
As loath that dark and silent night
Should cast her shrouding mantle o'er
A spot so beautiful, so fair;
It seemed as Eden bloomed once more
Within this world of sin and care.

I gazed around, a lovely rose,
Lured by the sun, its cell had burst,
Its beauteous petals to disclose,
And now of flow'rets smiled the first;
But lo! while yet I looked intent
It slowly withered on the stalk,
Its once proud head now drooping bent,
Its leaflets strewed the garden walk.

I sighed to think 't would bloom no more—
Then quickly cast a glance around,
Stretching the vaulted heavens o'er
A rainbow spanned their depths profound ;
It was indeed a lovely sight,
Its varied colors blent in one ;
I turned to say, "How fair, how bright!"
And looked again, but it was gone.

And, like that rose, some genial ray
May bid man's deep affections bloom ;
Yet bloom they but to pass away,
To perish in the silent tomb.
Fit emblem too of hopes that bow,
For though like it they radiant be,
Like it they charm us but to go,
And scarce are cherished ere they flee.

Thus mused I, sad to think a breath
Can blight earth's purest, deepest joy,
And that the end of all is death ;
Yet, must the tyrant *all* destroy ?
Ah no! there's one perennial flower,
One changeless bow unto us given—
The flower it blooms in Eden's bower,
The bow it spans the courts of Heaven.

THE FADED FLOWER.

I TOO, my own one, have a faded flower,
A withered rosebud, precious to my heart,
And fraught with mem'ries of the golden hour
When first I knew thee, dearest, *as thou art*.

That little bud, blest messenger from thee,
First whispered fondly of thy changeless love,
First woke the chords of Hope's sweet minstrelsy
And bade my soul the light of gladness prove.

And yet I scarcely dared to heed its voice
Until, when Fate had placed me at thy side,
Thou told'st me I was e'er thy heart's first choice,
And hailed'st me gladly as thy promised bride.

Thou bad'st me let the simple flow'ret speak
Its emblematic meaning in my ear,
And when we parted, all in one short week,
My withered bud I watered with a tear.

The stars beam calmly from the evening sky,
They speak to me of thee far, far away,
The gentle breeze goes softly whisp'ring by,
It breathes me, too, its sweetly saddened lay.

All, all are fraught with mem'ries of thee,
The breeze, the stars, but dearest to my heart
The *bud*, thy first love-offering to me,
The first that made me know thee *as thou art*.



WHAT ARE THE STARS?

OH! what are the stars, dear mamma? said a child
With a face so angelic, a blue eye so mild,
That she seemed like a creature of Heavenly birth,
A something of Eden yet left us on earth.
Oh! what are the stars that so brightly on high
Peep out midst the clouds of the pretty blue sky?
I am sure, dear mamma, they are looking at me,
And I wonder, I wonder—oh! what can they be?

You know that you told me God lives up above,
The good God who keeps me from harm by his love;
That his glory for ever and ever will shine
And always the same, and you called it divine;
And you said that his home was lovely and fair,
That his sun never sets, for night can not come there,
And sometimes when the stars are all shining so bright
I think they are beams of his glorious light.

And, too, you once told me when talking of Heaven,
About the dear angels to whom God has given
Such beautiful wings and soft garments of white,
And you said when I lie on my pillow at night
That they always are hov'ring around as I sleep,
And that God sends them to me my slumbers to keep,
And so when the stars peep out from the skies
I think that perhaps they 're the dear angels' eyes.

And you know, long ago, when our dear Willie died
And was laid in the grave-yard by Grandmamma's side,
You said back to God baby brother was given,
And told me that dying meant going to Heaven.
So at night, when lying awake in my bed
And see the stars shining so bright overhead,
I think as I wonder, perhaps they may be
All dear little children thus looking at me.

Yes, I think of all this, dear mamma; am I right?
Are the stars really beams of God's glorious light?
Are they bright angels' eyes; are they children like me?
And if not, dear mamma, pray what can they be?
My darling, you ask me, her mother replied,
What to know must to mortals like us be denied;
We know only God gives us the bright stars to shine,
And should thank for his blessings the Giver Divine.

THE FRIENDS OF OTHER DAYS.

THOUGH Friendship's smiles must ever bring
A gladness o'er the heart,
A sweetness o'er the spirit fling
From which 't is loath to part;
Yet dearer far, more near to heaven
The feelings it doth raise,
Whene'er that look, that smile is given
By "friends of other days."

Though dear to us the pleasures be
That come with after years,
Who can behold the past and see,
Without regretful tears,
Youth's pure, though swiftly fleeting joys?
And who that looks but says,
"Bright, though one touch of Time destroys,
The joys of other days?"

And though the hopes that fill our mind,
When life's spring-time is past,
More firmly seem with truth entwined,
And far more like to last
Than those bright visions of our youth,
Than those sweet siren days
Which once we deemed were only truth—
Yet dear the hopes of other days.



A VALENTINE.

DEAR one, I love thee! on thy gentle smile,
Thy words of tenderness, I live the while;
Though all the world smiles on me and thou not,
Their *smiles* in that one *frown* would be forgot;
And should'st thou *smile*, e'en though all others *frown*,
A fadeless brightness still my heart would crown.
I love thee for thy true and noble heart,
The stamp of goodness ling'ring where thou art,
The calm reserve upon thy manly brow
That bids me honor and respect thee now;
The winning smile that brightly now and then
Gleams forth to make me wish it back again,
The tender glance that thou hast sometimes cast
Upon me, dearest, as I softly passed.
And would I had the blest, the magic power
To change to light thine every darkened hour,
To bear alone thy heritage of care
And scatter joys around thee ev'rywhere.
But I have done, the love in ev'ry line
Will surely tell thee who's thy Valentine.

LINES.

LIFE is short and youth is fleeting ;
And the present and the past,
Hoary age and smiling childhood,
Are so closely linked at last,
That we wonder that the journey
So oft weary seemed between,
The "*to be*" seemed never ending,
But a span seems the "*HAS BEEN.*"

MY ROOM.

'T IS such a bright and cheerful room,
The loving sunbeams stray
At morn the open window through
And linger there all day.

Here love and taste have nothing spared
My sanctum to adorn,
To make my Eden serpentless,
My rose without a thorn ;

The sober tinted walls are decked
With border rich and gay,
And neath my feet bright autumn tints
Their glowing hues display.

Chairs, cushion, table, e'en the lounge
Whereon I lay me down,
In mingled beauty all reflect
The crimson and the brown ;

And then my pictures, Artist eyes
Might fail their charms to see,
But words indeed were poor to tell
All they have been to me.

Blest Angel Faith ! beneath the cross,
With holy eyes upturned,
What lessons in my hours of pain
I 've looked on thee and learned ;

And casting downward still my eyes,
Bright characters of gold
And blue and red all deftly wrought
The precious truth unfold,

That "God is Love," and loving me,
He keeps me neath His care ;
I know no good He doth not give,
No grief He doth not share.

I 'd name them all, but even now
The darkness grows apace,
Yet for my desk I fain would claim
One last, one little place :

Deposit of my inmost thoughts,
My spirit's minstrelsy,
Friend, solace, refuge, counsellor,
Art thou, my desk, to me !

To thee alone I first poured forth
These musings on my room,
And we have called them into shape
From chaos and from gloom ;

And now before thee I will kneel
In thankfulness and prayer
To Him whose tender love hath made
My lines of life so fair,

And wondering, if our earthly homes
Can thus be made so bright,
What must the glorious mansions be
In His own land of light !



BELLE.

MANY bells of many kinds
In man's pilgrimage he finds:
Fun'ral bells and wedding chimes,
Wailing notes and merry rhymes,
Morning bells and bells of eve
With the varied tones they leave,
Brazen tones of quick alarm,
Silvery bells whose tuneful charm
Steals like music on the ear,
Soft and low, yet sweet and clear;
Church bells on the silent air,
Calling sinful man to prayer;
Christmas bells, so old yet young,
"Peace and good will" on their tongue;
And yet to none of these I write,
In praise of none these lines indite. . . .

Another "Belle," whose form of grace,
Whose silvery tones and smiling face
My sweet inspiring theme shall be,
Though worthy loftier minstrelsy ;
No words its melody can tell,
More priceless is this magic "Belle" .
Than all the miser's hoarded pelf—
Fair girl, it is your own sweet self.



MUSINGS.

TIME passes swiftly, surely passes by,
And one by one years drop into the past
And evening shadows dim the morning sky,
And withered hopes that were too fair to last
Like autumn leaves lie strewn upon our path ;
Youth's fairy visions crumble into dust
And summer seas grow billowy with wrath,
And change and death blight all our love and trust.

The wandering dove, that could no refuge find
Where she might rest and fold her weary wings,
Proved not the waste of waters more unkind
Than we shall find the wrecks of human things ;
Sin stalks about upon the fair green earth,
Invades each crevice, lingers everywhere,
And close upon the smiles that hail each birth
Is breathed the wail of anguish and despair.

LOVE.

OH! what is love? a fading flower,
The fleeting vision of an hour,
The bow that decks the summer sky,
The passing breeze that flutters by,
A meteor flash across life's heaven,
A word, a promise idly given,
A strain of music come and gone,
Whose memory passeth with its tone,
A star that kindly beams a while
Then leaves us darker for its smile;
Say, is this love?

Ah, no! Love is a quenchless flame,
Forever burning, still the same,
A fire that angel torches light
To cheer our life's long, gloomy night,
A sun that will around us cast
A flood of brightness to the last,
The dearest boon to us is given,
The radiance of reflected Heaven,
Which when death comes will brightly shine,
Losing the Human in Divine;
Oh, this is love!

NEW YEAR'S DAY.

ALL hail! God bless this happy day!
When once again we meet,
Although full many a year life's plain
Has crossed with noiseless feet
Since last around this festal board
With those we hold so dear,
We 've met, Love's double pledge to yield,
A mingled smile and tear.

Smiles for the joy that loving brings,
The pure and steadfast ray,
That e'en 'mid tempests and 'mid storms
It sheds across life's way;
Tears for the griefs that even love
Has not the power to heal,
The care, the pain which soon or late
We one and all must feel.

But we 'll forget the tears to-day
And court the smiles instead,
Remembering Him who numbers e'en
The hairs upon our head ;
His Providence has spared us all
In love and joy to meet
Upon this day, which we must e'er
With twofold pleasure greet.



A THOUGHT.

TIME passeth onward in his stern career,
Destroying all of grace and beauty here;
Hopes that are brightest but the soonest fade,
For those we love most first the grave is made;
Youth's dream of bliss is all too quickly past,
But Sorrow's dream the longest life may last;
The wished for prize that eagerly we clasp
Must ever turn to ashes in our grasp;
Our greatest treasures in the tomb must lie,
It is the lot of all *to mourn*—then die.
Yes, such is time, a sea of sullen gloom
Which bears us onward to our final doom.
Can we then grieve when it shall mingled be
With the calm ocean of eternity?

TO A FRIEND.

LONG has my spirit yearned, my friend,
To sing a song for thee,
To cast around our steadfast love
The grace of minstrelsy.

But golden silence seemed to be
More sweet than silver speech,
In voiceless eloquence to tell
The depths words could not reach.

Yet there are moments when the tide
Of feeling swells so strong
And full it fain must burst the bounds
And pour itself in song.

And thus it is with me to-night,
The love within my soul,
Made deeper by each passing year,
No more will brook control.

THE RECORDING ANGEL.

ONE morn, from Heaven's open gate
On pinion swift an Angel fair
Went forth and took, bent earthward straight,
His passage through the viewless air;
His purple pinions bathed in dew
Gleamed brightly in the rosy light,
While joy and hope were shining through
His radiant face and cheered his flight.

Thus spake this Heavenly spirit then:
"Blest be my mission here below,
To wander 'mid the haunts of men,
Their good deeds and their ill to know.
The ill I'm sure I scarce will find,
For who a God so good and great
To grieve by sin could in his mind
Find thoughts so base consent await?"

“The good deeds they will many be,
Since surely there are none below
Who would not strive unceasingly
To please their God who loves them so.”
Thus spake he, while e’en now he came
More near that earth he judged so wrong,
And prayed at length near where a flame
Rose high and lit the plain along.

Its fitful glare a bloody sight
Disclosed unto the passer by;
It was a city sacked—the light
The victor’s fire that blazed on high.
Here children’s hands in wrath were raised
Against the sire that gave them birth,
And many cursed, while few there praised
The Lord alike of heaven and earth.

“Ah!” sighed the Angel, “I must flee
From this sad scene of sin and woe;
This bloodshed brings such grief to me,
I must in search of good deeds go
Which will blot out this fearful crime.”
And on he sped, but still he found
Not yet the priceless gem, and time
Was spent when he was lured to ground.

Scattered a sandy plain about
A band of horsemen paused to rest,
Each one with thirst appeared worn out,
And all of water set in quest.
But one cup could the soldiers find,
And this they near their leader set,
Though much did many in their mind
Wish e'en one drop their lips to wet.

He raised the cup unto his lips—
But looking, ere he drank, around,
The proffered nectar did not sip,
For, lying stretched upon the ground,
A dying soldier, saw he, look
With wistful eye toward the cup;
The draught to him he therefore took,
And raised him from his death sleep up.

"Here," said the Angel, "is a sight
On which I well may look with joy."
But scarce had he expressed delight
Than it was filled with deep alloy;
The leader turned him round and said,
"T was not to save his life I gave,
But that when I have long been dead
My fame may live beyond the grave."

With saddened heart the Angel heard,
A tear he dropped o'er fallen man ;
But hoping still, though long deferred,
His pilgrimage again began,
And just as twilight's shadows fell
O'er earth he lighted in a vale
Where all of calm and peace did tell,
And which he with new hope did hail.

He looked, a child whose golden hair
Flowed lightly on the passing breeze,
Whose rosy cheek and forehead fair
Rivaled the tints that roses seize,
Was lying there amid the flowers,
Its beauteous face all bathed in tears,
The traces of far sadder hours
Than should attend man's infant years.

And as it lay all lovely there
Without a shelter for its head,
A form almost as angel's fair
Bent o'er it as she sadly said :
" Sweet child, poor orphan, I will be
Thy mother ; I will guard through life
Thy steps, that blessed eternity
May crown thy days of mortal strife.

Then knelt she there on bended knee,
 Implored that God would lend her aid
A mother to the child to be ;
 And long and fervently she prayed,
The prayer, the deed the Angel caught,
 To Heaven bore them upward he ;
He 'd found the priceless gem he sought,
 That priceless gem was—"Charity."



THE TUNELESS HARP.

A HARP all silent stood alone,
Hushed was its sweet melodious strain,
Its golden strings all glittering shone,
But gave no echo back again.

A lovely maiden wondering spoke,
The chords her fairy fingers swept,
The magic of her touch awoke
The melody so long had slept.

Ah ! like that tuneless harp my heart
Is mute, its life, its music flown,
Till she with love's own marvelous art
Shall bid it beat no more alone.

FOR AN ALBUM.

I TOOK this album up to-day,
Which I have kept so long ;
But 't is not always that our thoughts
Will breathe themselves in song.
Sometimes life is all prose : its depths
Lie hidden from our sight ;
The moon is " but the moon and not
The "silvery Queen of Night."

The stars are simple stars, no more ;
The sun is *but* the sun,
And flowers are flowers, and so of all
Earth's glories, one by one.
And as this prosy-mood has been
My own, dear friend, of late,
Methought, to write these lines you asked,
Perchance 't were best to wait.

And I have waited till I fear
Your patience is worn out,
And you have marveled more than once
What I could be about.
So, though the muses linger yet
At such a dizzy height,
Up fair Parnassus' lofty mount
I dare not take my flight.

I'll fain essay a verse or two
Of prose, just set to rhyme,
If I can make my humdrum thoughts
In harmony to chime.
For after all I fear you'll find
In life's advancing day,
Far more of prose than poetry
Along the weary way.

Fair poesy belongs to youth,
Which grasps the rainbow bright,
And views each object earth contains
In that prismatic light ;
While builds its airy castle high
Of jewels rich and rare,
And knows not they may fall, e'en while
We turn to say, "How fair!"

Prose comes with middle age, when fall
The shadows on the plain,
And clouds that e'er have smiled before
Let down their chilling rain ;
When glowing fruits we've longed to taste
Have proved but dust within,
And false the glitter of the gems
We've risked our "all" to win.

Oh ! sad is this awakening from
The dream-life into real !
We love not the Ithuriel touch
That crushes our ideal.
We weary of the prose of life,
So fraught with care and pain,
And mourn the days, the halcyon days,
That may not come again.

But there's an Alchemist Divine
Who can restore the gold,
Disclose the hidden grace that e'en
The plainest forms may hold ;
Build palaces which Time's rude touch
Hath not the power to blight,
And yield us gems that e'er shall shine
With pure translucent light.

LINES.

THE sound of the clock is of silver,
The tales of the hours are of gold,
And some day our heads shall lie lowly
When all of these tales have been told.

When the hairs of our heads shall be silver,
May the tales of our lives be of gold,
To brighten the crown that awaits us
When all of those tales have been told.

The days of the past they are silver,
The days of the present are gold;
Who can tell what the enshrouded future
In its mystical depths may unfold?

A VALENTINE.

WITH spring's fair skies and fairer flowers
Come tender thoughts and dreamy hours,
And poets sing in tuneful praise
The glory of these summer days ;
The little birdlings choose their mates,
And youths and maidens tempt their fates
By writing here and there a line
Unto their chosen Valentine.

FRIENDSHIP.

TIME changeth all things, but it hath no sway
On friendship true that knoweth not decay ;
May or December, still alike 't will bloom,
Youthful in age and deathless in the tomb;
Venomous tongues may blight but not destroy,
Even more faithful in sorrow than in joy,
Ruling our lives with a soft and gentle power,
Yet brave and fearless when storms and tempest lower :
Best gift of God to us poor mortals given,
Earth while it holds thee hath a glimpse of Heaven.

Lyrics of Death.





MUST I GO ?

And *must* I go
Down to the realms of death below ?
Just as the earth, at Spring's soft breath,
Is waking from its wintry death
And trees are white with blossom's snow—
Oh ! *must* I go ?

And *must* I go
Down to the realms of death below ?
Life seems so beautiful, so fair,
Sunshine and flowers everywhere,
And song-birds flitting to and fro—
Oh ! *must* I go ?

And *must* I go
Down to the realms of death below ?
I lean upon my husband's arm,
So long my stay, my shield from harm,
And cry—with tears that none may know—
Oh ! *must* I go ?

And *must* I go
 Down to the realms of death below?
 I gaze upon my dear child's face,
 Fair in its youthful matron grace;
 My darling! Oh, I love her so!
 Oh! *must* I go?

And *must* I go
 Down to the realms of death below?
 My dear grandboys, so full of glee,
 Whose promise I shall never see
 To fullness and to ripeness grow.
 Oh! *must* I go?

* * * * *

Yes, I *must* go
 Down to the realms of death below;
 This pain-racked frame, this panting breath,
 These failing limbs, all whisper death—
 These heart-beats, now so faint and slow.
 Yes, I *must* go.

Yes, I *must* go
 Down to the realms of death below;
 Leave all this beauty and this bloom
 For the dark grave, the silent tomb;
 No summer sun for me shall glow.
 Yes, I *must* go.

Yes, I *must* go
Down to the realms of death below ;
But go where grief nor care, nor sin,
Nor weary pain may enter in,
To peace that earth could never know.
Yes, I *must* go.

Yes, I *must* go
Down to the realms of death below ;
But, when the river cold I cross,
Storm-beaten, weary, tempest tost,
Jesus will be with me I know !
Yes, I *must* go.

Yes, I *must* go
Down to the realms of death below ;
But, on the steps of God's White Throne,
I'll wait for them, my loved, my own,
And guard their angel robes of snow.
Yes, I *must* go.

Yes, I *must* go
Down to the realms of death below ;
But oh ! the glories of that place
Where I shall see Him "face to face":
The crown above, the cross below !
Take me, dear Lord, I fain would go.

WILL THE ANGELS LOVE LULU IN HEAVEN?

'T WAS a sweet little girl, with her long golden hair
Floating carelessly back on the waves of the air,
And a lovely blue eye with its mild softened beam,
And a cheek faintly tinged with the sunset's own beam;
While her lily-white brow and the dress that she wore
Were but types of the pure, sinless heart that she bore.

As she thoughtlessly gazed on the cloudless blue sky,
Hung out like a broad unfurled banner on high,
There flitted a shadow across her young brow;
It came, and it went, but 't is resting there now,
As she turns on her mother her eyes' chastened light
And whispers, "The angels were with me last night.

"And dear, dear mamma, how I wish you could see
All the beautiful pictures they painted for me,
And how lovely they seemed with their soft shining wings,
Holding dear little harps all with bright golden strings!
While they sang, oh! so sweetly, ever seeming to say
Oh! come, little Lulu, come with us away.

“But I thought then how lonely I’d be leaving you here,
With no little Lulu to kiss off each tear,
And how sad it would be at the hour of prayer
To call me in vain, for I could not be there;
And I thought, may I tell you? if wings were me given,
Mamma, would the angels love Lulu in Heaven?”

“Yes, dear,” she replied, while the tear drops fell fast
As her arm ’round her darling she tenderly passed,
“And the great God who dwells in the blue clouds above
Would watch o’er you and guard you with infinite love.
Then let us kneel, Lulu, together and pray
That He’ll comfort your mother when you’re called away.”

Spring’s hues passed away from the verdure-crowned bowers,
And the spirit-like child seemed to fade with the flowers.
As the snow-drop bows e’en to the zephyr’s soft breath,
So passed she on, on to the shadow of Death;
Till at length the last sigh of her pure heart was given,
And she dwelt with the angels who loved her in Heaven.



THE SHADOW.

OH! the breadth and the length of the shadow,
The wearisome shadow of Death;
How it blots out our joy and sunshine,
How it burdens our grief-laden breath!
How it clings like a pall to our rising,
How it broods o'er our moments of rest,
How it freezes the tears that would soften
The stony despair in our breast.

Who shall measure its terrible shadow,
As through the dim vista of years,
Weary years that are lying before us,
Stretching on, ever on, it appears,
Ever on to the limitless ocean
That washes Time's echoless shore,
Ever on until in the Eternal
The finite is lost evermore.

THE DYING YEAR.

FAR o'er the distant plain the wintry blast
Breathes its shrill requiem of the buried Past!
Now loud and fierce, now dirge-like in its tone,
Like to some struggling spirit's parting moan,
Each mournful echo whispering o'er and o'er
Of moments gone, to come back never more,
Weary and sea-beat by Time's stormy wave,
The old year totters onward to his grave;
His fleeting hours have one by one before
Him passed unto the far-off silent shore,
Upon whose solemn verge he lingers now
With hoary head and furrowed, care-worn brow.
The twinkling stars in all their glory rise
To light the arches of the vaulted skies,
And keep their vigil like some faithful friend
Who waits unwearied even to the end,
Burning unchanged through all the ages past
And shining e'er the brightest at the last.
The flickering flame of life's decaying fire
Bursts forth once more ere yet it can expire,
And the old year recalls his sacred trust
Ere yet his name shall crumble with the dust;
For deeds of fame the parting year hath wrought
With deep, far-reaching, solemn import fraught.

THE DOVE AND THE RAVEN.

ONCE a gentle Dove sat brooding
In a Southern forest dim,
And its low notes mingled sweetly
With the songster's choral hymn ;
And oh ! wondrous was the shadow
Of its outspread wings of snow,
And oh ! wondrous was the beauty
Of the land that slept below.

Shadow that was all of sunshine,
Sunshine, blessing, and repose ;
Land where orange and where myrtle
Blent their fragrance with the rose :
Oh ! the peaceful, vine-wreathed dwelling
Of the blooming Southern land ;
Oh ! the lightsome hearts and foot-steps
Of the happy household band !

Smiling forest, flowing river,
Dim and scented orange grove,
Calmly resting 'neath the radiant
Shadow of the white-winged Dove.
Then athwart the still, blue heaven
Spread a lowering, threatening cloud;
Thunders muttered in the distance,
Loud and louder, yet more loud.

Lightnings flashed, the storm grew wilder,
Gathering fierceness as it passed,
Till it burst in all its fury
O'er the sunny land at last.
O'er the river, through the forest,
On and on the storm-fiend sped,
Where the radiant Dove sat brooding
Croaked a Raven in its stead.

Where are now the peaceful dwellings?
Where the careless household band? . . .
Crumbling walls and blackened chimneys
In the groves of myrtle stand.
Sighing night-winds wake no echo,
Solemn stillness reigns profound;
Heart grows faint and eye grows weary
At the ruin scattered round.

But the voices, merry voices,
That resounded here of yore,
And the footsteps, lightsome footsteps,
Lingering at the open door.
Where are they? . . . The voiceless night-winds
Seems to stilly answer "Where?"
And the Raven's distant croaking
Dismal fills the ev'ning air.

Where the broad and flowing river
Passes onward to the main,
Darkly tinged its rushing current
With the life-blood of the slain;
Where the stifling smoke of battle
Lingers on the blasted plain,
Where uncounted braves have fallen
Who shall never rise again;

Where the shrieks and groans of dying
Friends and foemen rent the air,
There amid the blood and carnage,
There, the lightsome ones are there!
White and silent in the moonlight,
Face upturning to the sky,
Sternly telling how he battled,
Does the gray-haired sire lie!

White and silent in the moonlight,
Life departed, battle won,
Smiling lies the youthful warrior—
Only brother, only son!
When the bitter, bitter wailing
Of the broken heart is heard,
Where the widow pleads all vainly
For *one* word, one parting word!

Where the mother kneels in anguish
By her son's ensanguined bier,
Where the smiling face of childhood
Wears the mask of grief and fear.
There, amid these scenes of sorrow,
Mortal sorrow and despair,
Pallid, woe-worn, stricken mourners—
There, our lightsome ones are there!

Oh! the dismal, dismal croaking
Of the dark, ill-omened bird!
When, oh, when will it no longer
On these blood-stained fields be heard?
To that stricken land of sorrow
Fly and bid the conflict cease,
Spread thy snowy pinions o'er it—
Oh, thou radiant Dove of Peace!

Fly! and Heaven bless thy mission;
Like the Dove of sacred lore
Bear the olive-branch, enfold it
In thy shadow evermore.
Greet, oh! greet that band of heroes,
Battling bravely, though in vain:
Crowned with laurels green and deathless
Won from many a hard-fought plain.



DEATH.

STERN is thy mission here, O Death!
A killing blight is in thy breath;
Youth, age and manhood pass away,
All must thy summons stern obey,
E'en in our festive hours thou'rt near
Forever whispering in our ear:
"Oh, man, thou art but dust, and learn
That unto dust thou shalt return."
So speaks the Atheist, but oh!
The Christian spirit speaks not so.
O Death! he says, blest is thy sway,
The dawn thou art of perfect day.

MANASSAS.

STARS of my country ! ye are dim, ye are dim !
Your glory is shrouded in smoke and in blood ;
The voice of wailing is blent with your hymn,
And shadows are falling o'er land and o'er flood.
Stars ! that so long and so brightly have shone,
The beacon of freedom to lands o'er the main,
Leading millions and millions to liberty on,
Your light hath gone down on Manassas' red plain.

Unrighteous the conflict ! unholy the strife !
Unworthy the sires of Bunker Hill fame !
Unworthy the hero whose patriot life
Hath left us immortal his glorious name !
Oh ! Victory herself must turn pallid and weep,
And cypress spring up where the laurel should grow ;
For the conqueror's hand must in kindred blood steep,
And brother meet brother as deadliest foe.

Manassas ! Manassas ! thou field of despair !

What a watch-word of woe must thy gory plain be !
What thousands of homes were made desolate there,
What hopes, what affections were buried in thee !
The wife weeps for him who may never more come,
And parents bow low o'er the wreck of thy pride,
And childhood's tears flow in the still darkened home,
Yet not one can say, " For his country he died."

Ah, no ! 't is unblest and inglorious strife,
And even the victor must share in the shame ;
Even those who all bravely have yielded their life
Must sink all uncrowned by the laurels of Fame !
Yes ! the South should have bearded oppression and wrong
In the Halls of the Senate and not on the plain,
Ere she sundered the bonds once so shining and strong,
Which may never, alas ! be united again.

Then the tyrant who rules with such limitless sway
Would scarcely have dared raise his voice so loud,
Nor Destiny's fingers been busied to-day
In weaving for Freedom, bright Freedom, a shroud.
But 't is done, it is done ; it is vain to regret
That our star-spangled banner trails low in the dust,
And the place of the hero we reverence yet
Is filled by a minion unworthy of trust.

It is vain to regret, but it is not too late

To list to the lesson Manassas hath taught,
That the South yields not blindly or tamely to fate ;

Stop, brothers, aghast at the ruin ye've wrought !
The Union is severed, then part, and part here,

The God whom ye worship, Himself bids ye cease ;
In friendship clasp hands o'er our fair country's bier,
The blood of the slain cries for " Peace, give us peace !"



“TO BE, TO BLOSSOM, AND TO DIE.”

“**T**O be, to blossom, and to die,”
Read in the fallen leaves that round us lie,
Borne hither, thither by the north wind's strife,
This sad epitome of human life!
The lightnings flash and vanish as we glance,
The stars that gem the heaven's vast expanse
Scarce in their quiet midnight beauty rise
Ere they must fade before the morning skies.

The sunset clouds, with all their rich array
Of red and gold, pass into twilight gray;
The flowers we love scarce charm us with their bloom
Ere they too wither 'neath the common doom;
All forms of loveliness bespeak decay,
The ripest fruit is ever first to fall,
Perfection is the presage of the pall.

"To be, to blossom, and to die!"

Oh can it be that loving hearts whose sigh
Gives back our own, whose pulses throb with ours,
Must share this sentence with the stars, the flowers?
That eyes which glance responsive to our own,
That lips which echo e'en our spirit's tone,
Hands that we warmly, fondly clasp to-day,
Must with the coming morrow pass away?

Yes, even so; e'en the brightest star,
The fairest flower, the cloud that from afar
Bears most of Heaven, but the soonest fades.
So with the heart's affections: Phantom shades
Come from the dark, dread valley, cold and gray,
Laden with death, with blighting and decay,
And chilling mists that all too soon are pressed
Around our dearest, noblest, and our best.



LITTLE DELL.

LITTLE Dell! Little Dell!
Laughing eyes like bluest bell,
Lips of coral, brow of snow, *
Cheeks whereon the roses blow.
Baby graces, sweet to tell—
Little Dell! Little Dell!

Little Dell! Little Dell!
Sunbeam o'er our path that fell,
Smiling, cooing, fair to see,
Reaching dimpled arm to me,
Dimpled arms I loved so well—
Little Dell! Little Dell!

Little Dell! Little Dell!
Eyes like closing asphodel,
Lips apart, and golden head
Lightly pressing cradle bed,
Softly breathing slumbers spell—
Little Dell! Little Dell!

Little Dell! Little Dell!
Polished limbs like ocean shell,
Crowing, splashing silver spray
In the morning bath at play,
Pure as drops that round him fell—
Little Dell! Little Dell!

Little Dell! Little Dell!
Came a guest I may not tell;
Laughing eyes forever hid
Underneath the fringed lid,
Sunny eyes we loved so well—
Little Dell! Little Dell!

Little Dell! Little Dell!
Blinding tear drops rise and swell!
Pale and chill the lily blows
Where so lately bloomed the rose,
Precious bud that early fell—
Little Dell! Little Dell!

Little Dell! Little Dell!
Seraph bands a choral swell;
See *we* but a mossy bed,
Daisies o'er a golden head
Springing where our tear drops fell—
Little Dell! Little Dell!

Little Dell! Little Dell!
Gone with angels bright to dwell;
Nestled in the Savior's breast,
Early called, and early blest
With a bliss no tongue can tell—
Little Dell! Little Dell!



FULL OF YEARS.

“**F**ULL of years!” Long hadst thou journeyed,
Sainted mother—“full of years”—
Now o’er pathways rough and stony,
Strewn with thorns and not with tears;
Now through flowery, smiling valleys,
And anon o’er rugged hills,
Blessing God amid life’s pleasures,
Trusting Him amid its ills.

“Full of years!” Time’s silvery frost-work
Long had rested on thy hair,
And his deep’ning lines and furrows
Long had seamed thy forehead fair,
Long youth’s morning time had faded
In the dark’ning gloom of night,
But amid the gathering shadows
Turn’dst thou ever to the light.

“Full of years!” Thy loved had fallen
 By the wayside, one by one,
 Husband, children, friends of childhood,
 Few were left and many gone ;
 But the golden chain that bound thee
 Heart to heart unto them here,
 Brightening only seemed to draw thee
 Heavenward as the end drew near.

“Full of years!” Life’s journey ended,
 All its weary mile-stones passed,
 Angels lovingly have borne thee,
 Where thy hopes were anchored fast,
 To the bosom of thy Savior,
 To his blessed realms of light ;
 Blessed realms that know no parting,
 Know no shadow, know no night.



THE MERCILESS WATERS.

THERE'S a stillness and hush in the spring-time,
A stillness and hush in the heart,
A dark brooding cloud o'er the sunshine,
Too gloomy and dread to depart!
We heed not earth's sweet vernal beauty,
We hear not its anthem of praise,
Nor mark we its fresh springing blossoms,
Nor list to its wild forest lays.

One echo is haunting us ever,
One vision is mocking our eyes,
Absorbing each musical cadence,
Blotting even the sun from the skies. . . .
'Tis the roll of the swift-flowing waters,
The roar of the dark ocean waves
Rushing onward forever and ever,
Deep, deep, from the fathomless caves.

'T is the vision of palms in the sunshine,
Reaching feathery heads to the sky,
Unheeding the foam-crested billows,
Moaning ceaselessly, restlessly by.
Oh, palm-trees ! Oh, beautiful palm-trees !
Why stood ye so stately and still,
Looking down on the terrible struggle
That our hearts with such anguish doth fill ?

Oh, waters ! Oh, merciless waters !
Why claimed ye our noblest and best ?
Why bore ye our idol, our treasure,
Away on your treacherous breast ?
Down, down to your depths you have gathered
Full many a true heart and brave ;
Then could you not spare our beloved,
Our dear one, oh pitiless wave ?

No answer ! On, onward, still onward,
Flows ever resistless your tide,
Nor recks that it bears on its bosom
Our joy, our hope and our pride !
You have treasures uncounted, grim Ocean,
And myriad jewels so bright
That even your shadowy caverns
Must sparkle and flash with their light.

With the ruins and wrecks e'en of ages
These mystical grottoes are strewn,
For many a rich-freighted vessel
You have ruthlessly claimed for your own ;
And heads that are whitened and hoary
Lie low on your damp, rocky bed,
Side by side with the locks that are golden,
All sleeping the sleep of the dead.

What matter that mothers are kneeling
With quick-throbbing heart to implore
God's mercy and care for the darlings
They know not may come nevermore ?
What matter that fond wives are watching
With tear-blinded eyes the far main,
And souls growing faint with the longing
To welcome their dear ones again ?

Though their hearts bleed and break in their anguish,
On, on in your billowy path,
Unheeding, uncounting your victims,
You sweep in your merciless wrath.
But the hecatombs even of ages
Appease you not, still not your roar :
Forever unresting, unsated,
You clamor for more and yet more !

But oh! can it be that our treasure
Has gone to your fatal embrace?
Oh, give him back, Ocean! we're pining
For *one* precious glimpse of his face.
Give him back! See—our poor hearts are breaking!
Give him back! he is ours—our own!
Give him back! . . . O God! *is* there no answer
Save the rushing wave's sad monotone?

None! The sea never yields up its treasure,
Locked fast in its fathomless caves,
Till *He* speaks who commands e'en the tempests,
The storms and the winds and the waves—
The Savior—the merciful Savior!
Let us trust in Him—bow to his will—
Till His voice the *heart's* troubled waters
Shall sweetly bid, "Peace! be ye still."



HEAVENWARD.

DAY is waning—and the sunbeams
With a lingering glory fall
On a picture that is hauging
Just before me on the wall,
And with radiance of heaven
Do they crown, methinks, the face,
Strangely mingled with a touching,
Noble, loving human grace!

Hair but slightly touched with silver,
Forehead broad and full and high,
Mouth of firmness blent with sweetness,
Piercing bright yet tender eye,
Look upon me from the canvas,
Where the lights and shadows fall,
Till it seems a living picture
Just before me on the wall.

And I sit here gazing, musing,
While the daylight fades apace,
But through all the gathering darkness
Still I see that perfect face ;
It hath lines of pain and sorrow,
Pain and sorrow bravely borne !
It bespeaks one who, though conquering,
Yet hath known to weep and mourn.

And the lips which oft have parted
Both to comfort and to pray,
Seem to speak again their watchword :
Heavenward, child ! methinks they say !
Heavenward ! heavenward ! Clouds may shroud thee
In the starless gloom of night,
Hasten ! hasten to the kingdom
Of the never-fading light.

Heavenward ! heavenward ! Thorns may prick thee,
Press thee closer on thy way,
God is ever near to guide thee,
And His staff will be thy stay.
Heavenward ! heavenward ! Earthly burdens
Must at last be all laid down ;
Long not, yearn ye not to change them
For a bright, a glorious crown ?

NOT DEAD, BUT SLEEPETH.

"He giveth His Beloved Sleep."

YES! fold the patient, weary hands,
Bring hither robes of white,
But gently, softly, silent tread,
She fain would rest to-night.

Flowers, ay! She loved them, let them then
Upon her pillow rest,
Lie loosely in her silent clasp
And on her spotless breast.

Smooth back the mass of waving hair
From off the peaceful brow,
With pain and suffering lined no more,
'Tis crowned with glory now.

How still, how fair, how pure she looks,
How dreamless in her sleep,
We almost hear the angel wings
That o'er her vigil keep.

But will she wake again? oh, will
Those loving, tender eyes
Return once more our yearning glance,
Greet us with glad surprise?

Those lips, those hands whose ministry
Was e'er to love and bless—
Oh! will they meet our own again
In clinging, fond caress.

She is so still! We hear no sound;
We list! we catch no breath—
No tint upon the pallid cheeks.
O God! can this be "death?"

* * * * *

"Death? No, my child! Death hath no power
Such sinless souls to keep,
But weary of earth's care and pain,
My loved, I give them *sleep*."

"Sleep, whose awakening sweet, how sweet!
Is on My sacred breast,
Where, folded in My sheltering arms,
They evermore shall rest.

"Sleep! which shall gently waft them o'er
The river broad and fair,
That laves My great Eternal Throne
And flows forever there.

"Not dead? Oh, no! The pastures green
Her feet already tread,
The living waters she has quaffed—
She sleeps—she is not dead."

DEAR LITTLE MARGIE.

DEAR little Margie! Beautiful Margie,
Pure as the snowdrop on Spring's vernal breast,
Fair as the angels! early they've called thee,
Called thee away to the land of the blest.

Dear little Margie! Fond little Margie,
Closed are the eyes, blue with light from above,
Still the wee fingers, whose clinging touch lingers
Yet on our cheek with its pressure of love.

Dear little Margie! Gay little Margie,
Filling our home with thy sunshine and mirth,
Hushed is forever the song that shall never
Die in our hearts till we die from the earth.

Dear little Margie! Snowy-robed Margie,
Smooth are the curls on thy fair baby brow,
Folded 'mid flowers the hands that were ours,
Hands that are clasping the cherubim's now.

Dear little Margie! Frail little Margie,
Earth was too cold for a blossom like thee,
Far from its blighting, its chilling, its smiting,
Early the Savior has bidden thee flee.

Dear little Margie! Angelic Margie,
Where never can enter earth's shadows and gloom,
In God's beautiful garden, Himself for thy warden,
Each sweet baby grace into glory shall bloom.

And God is but keeping thee, Margie, our Margie,
For us, till like thee from earth's prison we rise,
And worthy to meet thee, with joy to greet thee,
To part, oh, no more! in the beautiful skies.



“NO MORE PARTING.”

“**N**O more parting!” Dear one, tell us,
On that solemn, silent shore,
Can it be that we shall meet you,
Meet you, and to “part no more?”

“No more parting!” Oh, beloved one!
Life is dark since you have gone,
Shadows dim the bright horizon,
Sorrow blends with every tone.

Would you know when most we miss you?
In the early morning light,
In the deep’ning glow of noontide,
In the loneliness of night,

Ever, ever mournful voices
Breathe your name upon the air;
We are lonely, lonely, darling,
Can you smile upon us there?

List! e'en now your angel spirit
Whispers softly from above,
"Trust, oh, trust your Father's mercy,
Know ye not that God is love?"

He is calling; come ye to him,
To that shining golden door
Into which, when ye shall enter,
We shall meet to "part no more."



“TWIN BLOSSOMS.”

DID you see our two beautiful blossoms!
Twin rosebuds, so pure and so white,
Dropped down from God's heavenly gardens
To make our home lovely and bright?
Did you see how we loved and caressed them?
Soft, oh! softly our kisses were given,
For of all our home's sweet, living flowers,
These were latest, and freshest from heaven.

Did you mark how, each day, was unfolded
Some new dawning beauty or grace,
Till we thought we could picture the angels
As we gazed on each dear baby face?
Ah! *that* was the season of blooming;
But there came, too, a season of blight,
And our blossoms, our beautiful blossoms,
Shrank and wilted beneath its stern might.

Pale and paler—how pale grew their roses,
 Till the lily was left all alone,
 And the smile of their coral lips faded
 Till 't was lost in a low plaintive moan.
 Their eyes, but so late taught to brightness,
 And give back the love-light of ours,
 Now were languid and listless and drooping
 As our flowers, our sweet budding flowers.

Oh, buds, precious buds! intertwining
 Till they seemed but *one blossom, one life!*
 How we struggled and prayed for our treasures
 Till our poor hearts grew faint in the strife!
 Little thought we that *they* could be severed,
 Sent as *one* from the gardens above,
 And *we* left so sad and so lonely,
 With but *half* of our blossom to love.

But the angel that hovered around them,
 Reaching forth, gathered one—precious one!
 Then, pausing in pity, he whispered:
 "Peace! Peace be to you! I have done!
 I have parted your beautiful blossom;
One half to my Master I bear,
 But, listing the voice of your anguish,
 The *other* I leave to your care."

Then plumed he his snowy-white pinions,
But we saw not their heavenly grace,
For we felt, only felt he was bearing
Our babe from our yearning embrace !
There 's a low narrow mound in the churchyard,
A smooth, empty crib in the room,
And 't is hard, oh ! so hard to remember
That our blossom in heaven doth bloom.

When the dear tiny hands that are left us
Entwine, oh ! so softly, our own,
We can not but sigh for the others
Clasped in love at the heavenly throne !
When, clad in his flowing white garments,
We strain our dear babe to our breast,
How our aching heart longs for the other
That is wearing the robes of the blest.

But, oh ! when the years, rolling onward,
Have left far behind in their flight
The morning, life's beautiful morning,
With its freshness and roseate light,
When the noon-day of life to this darling
Is bearing its dangers and cares,
Then will not our hearts be all thankful
That the other is safe from its snares ?

Oh, yes! we'll rejoice that sorrow,
Temptation, or danger, or sin,
His abode, the abode of the blessed,
May never at all "enter in;"
And the treasure that's left to our keeping,
We'll pray God to guide it aright
Till our blossom—on earth now severed—
Shall bloom again *one* in His sight.



THE MOONLIT GRAVE.

SEE! the evening star is rising
In the moonlit autumn sky,
Moving slowly, slowly onward
As the mournful train goes by—
Onward still, until it pauses
Just above a new-made grave,
Where the birds sing in the summer
And the weeping willows wave.

“Dust to dust!” Our dearest treasure
Earth has taken to her breast,
And the evening star sinks slowly,
Slowly, silently to rest.
Precious star! wert thou an angel
Sent to bid our souls “look up”
To His throne, who, though all mercy,
Offers us this bitter cup?

We will humbly try to drink it,
Trusting Him who died to save,
Though our earthly hopes lie buried
In that grave, that moonlit grave.
Fare thee well, then, O beloved!
Gone, forever gone—but yet
We may one day meet and know thee
Where the stars shall never set.



“TWO.”

⑨ SUMMER winds! breathe soft and low;
O Summer sunshine! veil your beam;

A mock'ry to our bitter woe

Your fragrance and your brightness seem.
And hide, ye blue and smiling skies—

Oh! hide behind the storm clouds gray;
One broken life before us lies,
So cold, so chill, so drear to-day.

We grope all blindly for the light,

We cry aloud, but cry in vain:
Like echoes of the silent night

Our anguished wail comes back again.
We can not hear the angel wings

Or see the hosts beyond the waves;
Day-dawn or night, “one” vision brings—
Our graves, O God! our little graves!

"*Two!*"—God have mercy on us!—" *two!*"

"*Two!*"—of our very lives a part:

Fair buds, that unto beauty grew,

With roots implanted in our heart;

Oh! when we call our household band

Around us at the evening hour,

How can we yield to Thy demand

Our op'ning and our closing flower!

Our first—our last—beginning—end!

Oh! Thou, dear Lord, and only Thou

Canst aught of light and comfort send;

Teach us, we pray Thee, teach us how

To learn submission to our loss,

And at Thy feet bow humbly down,

Till Thou one day shall take the *cross*

And give us in exchange the *crown!*

"*Two!*"—God of Mercy!—angels "*two!*"

"*Two*" shining stars whose heav'nly light

Shall pierce this midnight darkness through

And put these clinging shades to flight;

"*Two*" golden links in that bright chain

That day by day shall brighter be,

And e'en through suff'ring and through pain

Draw us the "*nearer, God, to Thee!*"

"*Two*" lambs forever safe, secure
In the Good Shepherd's peaceful fold;
"*Two*" op'ning blossoms, spotless, pure,
Snatched from earth's blighting and its cold;
"*Two*" voices mingling in the song
Chanted before Thy Throne above:
Grant us to "suffer and be strong,"
And guard us with a "*two*" fold love.



THE NUN'S REWARD.

“FIFTY years!” Angelic voices
Swell the echo: “Fifty years!”
Through the sounding courts of heaven
From this vale of sighs and tears;
“Fifty years” of love and labor
Consecrated to the Lord;
“Fifty years,” whose bloodless conquests
Shame the triumphs of the sword!
“Fifty years” amid the lowly,
By the dying and the dead;
“Fifty years” along the pathway
With a Savior’s footsteps red!

“Fifty years!” We fold life’s pages
Backward—backward, one by one,
From the last that nears the finis
To the record scarce begun—
And we see a gentle maiden
In the dawning grace of youth,
At her side attendant spirits,
Virtue, Innocence, and Truth;

All unheeding 'neath their shadow
Walks she safely, though the way,
Straight and narrow in the morning,
Widens with the glorious day,
Broad and broader, ever broader,
Till a point is reached at last
Where two pathways through the future
Lead divergent from the past.

One, all sunshine and all flowers,
Spreads before her fair and bright,
With its luring vistas teeming
All with dazzling, golden light,
While bewild'ring all the senses
Luscious perfumes rich and rare,
Strains of soul-entrancing music
Freight the soft and balmy air.

And the other! steep and rugged,
Thorn-beset on every side,
'Neath whose clouds and brooding shadows
May no way-side blossom hide.
Can it be that she doth linger,
Can it be her untried feet
Pause midway between the thorn-path
And the one so fair and sweet?

Yes! and lo! above the shadows,
Like the sun behind a cloud,
Or the light of Tabor gleaming
Over Calv'ry's blood-stained shroud,
Doth a soft and silv'ry radiance
With a hallowed glory rest,
While a form, with hands uplifted
To the kingdom of the blest,
Draweth near the youthful maiden
Saying, "I am Faith! The way
Thou shouldst choose is dark and thorny,
But it leads to endless day!
Storms may rage and dangers threaten,
And the cross may weigh thee down,
But at last thou shalt exchange it
For a bright immortal crown!
He has carried His before thee,
And He bids thee hold thine fast
That thy soul may pass triumphant
Through the jasper gates at last!"

Then from out the flow'ry mazes
Of the broad and sunny path
Fairy forms of matchless beauty,
Smiling even in their wrath—
"Listen not, sweet maid," they pray,
"Suffer not that Faith should tempt thee
Through her gloomy, toilsome way.

"Come! and revel 'mid the music
And the sunshine and the flowers,
We would woo thee to the gladness
And the beauty that are ours!
Not a thorn shall e'er beset thee,
And no cross shall weigh thee down,
And we too will from our gardens
Weave for thee a flow'ry crown."

"But *your* blossoms," said the maiden,
"They will wither, they will fade!
And your sunshine soon be darkened
By death's chilling blighting, shade!
Tempt me not! Content and ready
For whatever may betide,
I will bear my cross, O Savior!
Starry Faith my friend and guide!"

Fifty years have since that morning
To the maiden come and passed,
And the cross, though often weary,
Has she borne from first to last:
And her head is crowned with silver,
And the furrows seam her brow,
And the roses of her spring-time
Are all pale and withered now.

But the holy prayers she's uttered
And the loving deeds she's done
Angels, like a jeweled ros'ry,
Now are telling one by one;
And the silv'ry light of Tabor
Streameth purely, calmly down,
And the Cross will soon be yielded
For the bright immortal Crown.



TWO ANGELS.

AH! one day we sat in the sunshine,
And the birds too were singing around,
And the leaves budded forth in the forest,
And the flowers sprang up from the ground.
All lovely and fair was the present,
And the future seemed never so bright
With all its far-reaching to-morrows
Stretching on in a vista of light.

But e'en as we sat thus so smiling
There came to our wide open door
A shadowy form which had never
Crossed over our threshold before,
And the rush of his sable garments
And the chill of his icy breath
Froze the smile on our lips and the sunshine;
'T was the terrible Angel of Death!

How we shivered and groaned in our anguish !

'T was so weary, so bitter to tread

The steep, thorny path, though the Savior,

Dear Savior! before us had led.

Absorbed in our tears and our sorrow,

As in smiles and in sunshine before,

We saw not, we heard not the angel

That once more was nearing our door.

This angel had fair, snowy pinions

And long flowing garments of white,

And he dawned on our gloom and our darkness,

A beautiful vision of light!

And straight from the land where can enter

Neither sorrow nor sinning nor strife,

He bore in his arms a fair cherub,

And we knew 't was the Angel of Life!



LAY HER DOWN GENTLY.

LAY her down gently,
Break not her rest,
Sweetly she sleepeth
The sleep of the blest!
Close the fringed eyelids,
Fold the white hands,
Smoothe back the ringlets
In soft shining bands.

Bring the fair raiment
Meet to adorn
One whom the angels
Summoned this morn ;
Gather the flow'rets,
Wreathe her pale brow,
Crowned with the light of
Eternity now.

Fair the still presence
 Meeting your eyes,
Fairer the spirit
 Ent'ring the skies.
Give back your lamb to
 The "Good Shepherd's" care ;
Safe on His breast will
 She wait for you there.



THOU ART GONE.

THOU art gone in thy beauty;
Death has called thee away,
And we list for thy coming
All vainly each day.

Thou art gone! oh, how sadly
The weary words fall
On sad hearts that loved thee
Most fondly of all!

Thou art gone! the sad echo
Responds to each strain;
E'en the breeze seems to whisper
Thou wilt come not again.

But we'll think of thee ever
As hovering near,
And thus Hope like a rainbow
Will shine through each tear.

NOT DEAD.

HE is not dead! He has but gone before
To peace; the angels steered him through the tide
Whose silent waves the bright eternal shore
From this too often weary world divide.

He is not dead! He has but raised the veil
Before the Holy of all Holies, and passed in
To bliss that through all ages can not fail,
Leaving forever tears and pain and sin.

Long had he journeyed! Man's three score and ten,
And yet another decade: then how sweet,
How gladly hailed the summons must have been
To lay his burdens down at Jesus' feet!

So gladly that 't was greeted with a smile
Whose glory lingered on his brow so fair,
As if the soul, in leaving for a while
Its temple, stamped a benediction there.

Not dead! Not dead, though we have seen him lie
With folded hands above a pulseless breast,
Lips that were mute e'en to our anguished cry,
Eyes closed forever in a dreamless rest.

Not dead! Just gone before us for a while
In that fair New Jerusalem a place
To guard for us, and like a star his smile
Shall draw us heavenward in its holy grace.



ALONE IN PRISON.

AND thou hast come again grim monster, Death!
Come in the fullness of thy blighting power,
Come with the early spring's first balmy breath,
Crushing the hopes of many a weary hour.
Swift, silent messenger! what woe, what deep
Enduring anguish hath thy coming wrought!
A grief no human art can lull to sleep,
A shadow dark'ning ev'ry word and thought.

Alone in prison! thou, the young, the brave;
Alone in prison! far from home and us:
'Tis hard to yield thee to thine honored grave,
But, oh! 't is doubly hard to yield thee thus!
Ah! rather hadst thou fallen in the fight,
Patriot leader of a patriot band,
Fallen with glory in the cause of right
While battling nobly for thy native land.

God did not will it so: the precious life
Thou freely gavest at thy country's call
Is yielded, not amid the battle strife,
But by a sadder martyrdom than all.
The noble soul oppression could not tame
The heart that throbbed with pure unfailing trust,
Our God has called, and left the tyrants' shame!
His the immortal, theirs the passing dust.

Yes! He has claimed thee, we have laid thee down
Within thy coffin in thy glorious youth,
And twined the cypress in the laurel crown
To deck the martyr in the cause of truth.
Ah! Donelson! what bitter tears were shed,
Tears e'en of blood must on thy hills be poured,
And not alone for those thine honored dead,
But those whose fate was sadder than the sword.



FORGET NOT THE DEAD.

FORGET not the dead who died for us:
You whom this song can not reach with its transient breath,

Those ears that are deaf, stopped with the brown dust of death,

Blind eyes that are dark to your own deathless glory,
Silenced hearts that are heedless to praise murmured o'er ye,
Sleep deep! sleep in peace! sleep in memory ever,
Wrapt each soul in deeds of its deathless endeavor.

Forget not the dead who died for us.

Forget not the dead who died for us,
Till that great final peace shall be rung through the world,
Till the stars be recalled and the firmament furled
In the dawn of a daylight undying, until
The signal of Sion shall be seen on the hill
Of the Lord, when the day of the battle is done,
And the conflict with time by eternity won.

Forget not the dead who died for us.

ALONE WITH GOD.

ALONE on the land, alone on the sea,
Alone on the shore, alone on the lea,
Alone at the first ros'ate hue of day,
Alone at the sunset's last fading ray—
Always alone with God.

Wherev'er we are, whatever we be,
It's food for reflection for you and me,
Surrounded by friends in the bright daylight,
Alone with our thoughts in the dead of night—
Always alone with God.

NUNC DIMITTIS.

NOW, while life's summer sweetness fills the air
With richest fragrance, while the flowers bloom,
And song-birds rob the forests of their gloom,
And skies are blue, and every thing is fair,
E'en now, dear Lord, ere yet the glory pale,
Unto that land whose sunshine can not fail,
Let me depart!

Now, while the friends of youth prove faithful still,
And tender eyes speak love to mine again,
And no harsh discord mars life's sweet refrain;
Ere friendship yet has felt time's blighting chill,
E'en now, dear Lord, far, far above the range
Of doubt, mistrust, of shadows, and of change,
Let me depart!

Now, while around the social festive board
I yet may summon all my dear ones—all,
And no loved voice is silent at my call,
And on no vacant chair need tears be poured,
E'en now, dear Lord, far from earth's shadows cold,
Secure within the gates of pearl and gold,
Lord, let me go!

Now, even now, I feel thy hand is laid
In love upon me, and thou bidst me go,
Ere yet my life has lost its morning glow
Or I have seen its sweet illusions fade ;
My loved will follow, though I go alone,
Dear Lord, where grief and sin are all unknown,
Lord, let me go!



Dramas in Verse.

THE
STAR OF BETHLEHEM,

OR

IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE

A DRAMA IN FIVE ACTS.



CHARACTERS.

STAR OF BETHLEHEM,	FAIRY QUEEN,
ANGEL OF CHARITY,	FAIRY FIDELIA AND TRAIN,
DAME URSULE,	ELSIE, HILDA,
FLOWER SPIRIT AND TRAIN,	SPIRIT OF THE ORIENT AND TRAIN,
SPIRIT OF HISTORY AND TRAIN,	SPIRIT OF POETRY AND TRAIN,
SPIRIT OF FICTION AND TRAIN.	

THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM,

OR

IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE.

ACT I.

SCENE—*Cottage. DAME URSULE busied about the fire; HILDA playing near her; ELSIE seated at some distance, absorbed in a book.*

DAME URSULE. What ails this fire? I'm sure I'd like to know;

It will not blaze—no matter how I blow. [*Blows furiously.*

Come, Hilda, here! I want another stick!

That's right; that's right; jump when I speak; be quick!

You're a good child; your mother out and out;

While Elsie! she would sit and read, no doubt,

And think of nothing but to take her ease

If we before her eyes should starve and freeze.

Her father's child in ways as well as looks!

He cares for nothing but his hateful books.

(If they'd bring clothes and food I would not care.)

And Elsie's like him (they're a precious pair!)

To think of bringing all the way from town
A book, indeed! no shoes or Sunday gown!

There's Madeline, the miller's maid—her Fritz
Knows nought of books; but, stout and strong, he splits
The mountain pines, and many a kreutzer gains,
And keeps his herds and flocks upon the plains;
While she sits by the fire without a care,
And wears a silver bodkin in her hair;
And (*musingly*) we were wedded on the self-same day!
“Poor Madeline!” I heard the neighbors say,
“How can she mate with such a boorish clown!
There's Ursule's Otto! e'en the wise priest's gown
Would not ill fit him; *he's* so good, so learned
And handsome too!”

Ah! (*sighs*) how the luck has turned!
Now, when I pass they pity me by stealth;
Shake hands with Fritz, and loudly praise his wealth—
And all from books! If Otto had learned how
To hunt the chamois and to guide the plow,
He might be rich and *strong*—not on his bed,
Too weak and sick to raise his hand or head.
And how he coughs!—sometimes—I think—but there!
That fire's out again! I do declare!

[*Stoops down to build it, and brushes away a tear.*
What's this? a tear? I must be turning fool
To sit here idle while the ashes cool!
And Elsie—ah! I don't believe she's stirred!

(*Calls.*) "Elsie!" The silly child don't hear a word;
 But if her father should but make a sound,
 She'd hear—and heed too, fast enough, I'm bound.
 (*Calls again and louder.*) "E-l-s-i-e!"

[*ELSIE slowly raises her head and looks around.*

'Tis well I've made you hear at last!
 Pray, can't you see the day is going fast?
 And who'll go to the spring—drive home the cow?

ELSIE (*springing up*). I will; I will; I did not know till
 now

That it was late; 't is such a lovely book,
 And full of pictures. Come here, Hilda; look!

[*HILDA goes to her, and they turn over the leaves, the DAME
 meanwhile being intent on household cares.*]

HILDA (*clapping her hands*). How pretty, sister! But
 what does it mean?

ELSIE (*pointing to the pictures*). Oh! those are Fairies;
 that's the Fairy Queen.

This book tells all about them—lovely things!
 Their dazzling garments and their shining wings,
 And how they come to little folks at night
 And bring them pleasant dreams and slumbers light,
 And often take them kindly by the hand
 And lead them through the wondrous Fairy land.
 Beautiful flowers are always blooming there;
 The trees are gold, and shine with jewels rare;
 And then—the birds and butterflies!—oh dear!
 And music!—heav'nly sound to mortal ear!

And, Hilda, do you know? if children try
To be quite good, the pretty Fairies nigh
Will often grant them wishes—one—two—three!

HILDA (*eagerly*). Oh! that is nice! I'd wish—now,
let me see--

A doll with big blue eyes and curly hair,
Like that we saw last Easter at the Fair;
And next, a cake stuffed full of plums I'd choose,
Red stockings too and buckles for my shoes.

ELSIE (*thoughtfully*). I'd wish that father might be well
once more;

If that could be, I'd ask for nothing more.
But stay! it *would* be very nice indeed
To have as many books as we could read;—

DAME URSULE (*turning suddenly around*). Not gone yet,
Elsie? Still that book! that book!

And calling Hilda too! to make *her* look!

[*Taking the book, she puts it on a high shelf.*

Now mind! see here! I put it on this shelf,
And none shall take it down except myself.

ELSIE. I'm sorry, mother; you've a right to scold:
Indeed, I meant to do as I was told;
But I called Hilda, and then—I forgot!
But you'll forgive me, mother; will you not? [*Kisses her.*
That's right! I know you are not angry now;
You'll see how quickly I'll drive home the cow.
And please let Hilda go: it is so warm—

And I'll take care she does not come to harm.

DAME URSULE. Well, she may go; but mind you do
not stay

A single moment loit'ring on the way;
And don't fill Hilda's head with books and stuff;
Your own is turned! I'm sure that is enough.

[*Exeunt* ELSIE and HILDA.

[DAME *soliloquizes, taking her knitting in her hand.*]

Now what came over me to be so weak
With Elsie! *But* a word had she to speak,
The vixen! and I melted right away.
It sure must be the trouble that each day
Comes near and nearer; for I know 't is vain
To hope that Otto can get well again—

[*Wipes her eyes and suppresses a sob.*

And she's his image! has his very face,
His winning smile, his gentle, tender grace.
'T is hard to chide her. But—we are so poor!—
The wolf each day creeps nearer to the door;
And she *must* learn to work, and spin, and knit;
Not idly o'er those useless books to sit.
I've always had a sharp and ready tongue;
Temper to match—that spared not old or young—
Not even Otto; though there'll never be
But one dear Otto in this world for me.
And I'll be firm with Elsie! She shall learn
At all the household tasks to take a turn;—

But—there she comes!—and singing too her song;
I fear me much 't will turn to tears ere long.

[*Enter* ELSIE and HILDA, *singing*.]

ELSIE. Here we are, mother! Did n't we come soon?
We hurried Brindle when we saw the moon,
And would not even let her stop to take
A drink, for fear that father might awake
And want his milk. But he is sleeping still,
And he'll wake better (*anxiously*); don't you think he will?

DAME URSULE. Don't ask me? I've no time for talk-
ing now:

You set the table while I milk the cow.
I always try to hope the best, I'm sure;
But doctors don't know always how to cure. [*Exit* DAME.

ELSIE (*busied about the table*). But they'll cure him!—

I know they will!—they must!

The good priest told us we must pray and trust,
And ev'ry night I clasp my hands and say,
“Dear Jesus! please cure father right away.”
He *must* be well by Christmas. Hilda dear,
Are you not glad that Christmas is so near?

HILDA. Oh, yes! oh, yes! and we will have a tree
Like we had last year, full as it can be
Of pretty candles—red, and green, and blue!
And dolls and toys—cakes and candies too!

ELSIE. And books for father—and—but let me see—

[*To* DAME URSULE, *who has just entered with a bucket of milk*.]

Mother, what would you like best on the tree?

DAME URSULE. The tree indeed! What put it in your head

To think of Christmas trees? If you have bread
And fire and clothes, and do not starve or freeze
By Christmas, you may thank God on your knees.

[ELSIE bursts into tears; the DAME continues more gently.]

Hush, child!—don't cry; I was too harsh, I fear!
And though we're very poor—too poor this year
To think of trees—we are not starving yet.
Come, eat your supper, and you'll soon forget
It all. See! here's your milk! [*Pushing a bowl toward her.*]

HILDA (*who is already eating*). And nice milk too!
And, Elsie, let me tell you what we'll do;
We'll make a wish—two wishes—you and me,
And ask the Fairies for a Christmas Tree.

ELSIE. But will we get it? I can't understand
How far we live from happy Fairy land:
Sometimes I think it is not far away;
For though I see no signs of them by day,
Still often, when the moon shines in the night,
I catch a glimpse of tiny forms in white;
And sometimes lately I have seen a star
So wondrous bright that, though away so far,
It seems to speak to me: "Sleep, little maid,"
It says, "sleep while I watch; be not afraid!"

DAME URSULE. The child is daft; she don't know what she says.

Elsie, there are no Fairies nowadays;
So drive those silly fancies from your head,
And you and Hilda go at once to bed,
And sleep too, mind you—there—good night—good night.

[*Kisses them. Exeunt* ELSIE and HILDA.]

Otto sleeps long! I hope it is all right. [Rises.]

I'll look at him. Ah, me! my heart is sore!

I never knew how dear he was before. [*Exit* DAME.]

(*Curtain drops.*)

ACT II.

SCENE—*Fairy Court.* QUEEN OF THE FAIRIES *in soliloquy.*

FAIRY QUEEN. Why am I not content? Bright Fairy
land

Its rarest treasures yields at my command;
Soft breezes gently woo me; fairest flowers
With beauty and with fragrance crown my bowers;
Sunshine about me falls from smiling skies,
To dim whose azure storms nor clouds arise;
Harmonious sounds forever greet my ear,
And blithesome Fairies ever linger near,
And almost ere I speak they flit away
On wings of love, my wishes to obey.
But yet there is a void, an inward strife,
A something wanting in my higher life,
That robs me of my peace, do what I will,
And leaves me longing and unhappy still!
Ah yes! this dazzling, sparkling diadem
Is incomplete. It lacks a single gem—
But one; and yet, without it, dimmed for me
The luster of all other gems must be!
What can I do? I join the Fairy dance,
Where grace and music mingle to entrance;
Roam 'mid the flowers, or in a graver mood

Seek the dim greenwood's leafy solitude,
 Or in the solemn stillness of the night
 Ask of the stars, so changeless and so bright:
 "Oh shining orbs! that dwell so near the throne
 Of wisdom, why must I, and I alone
 Of all the Fairy train, within my breast
 Cherish this longing and this vague unrest?
 I have so much—ah! why, dissatisfied,
 Must I e'er mourn the single gift denied?"
 In vain! they answer not!—and I must fain
 Solve my own problem. [*Pauses and thinks.*

Ah! my Fairy train!

I'll summon them!—and they, earth, air, and sea,
 Shall e'en traverse until they bring to me
 The prize I covet. [*Waves her wand.*

"Fairies, waiting near,

Your queen commands: Appear! Appear!! Appear!!!"

[*Enter FAIRIES, singing and dancing.*]

FAIRY FIDELIA. We have come, gracious Queen, we
 have come at your call;

So gladly your summons was greeted by all,
 That our happy hearts sent forth a joyful chime,
 And our feet to the jubilant echoes kept time;
 For we knew, though our queen, you would *not* think us
 wrong

To seek thus your presence with dance and with song.

QUEEN. Ah, no, my Fairies! far be it from me

To cast a shadow o'er your blithesome glee,
Although this strange, vague discontent doth fling
Its blight, its upas shade on ev'rything
I hear, or see, or feel.

FAIRY FIDELIA. Tell me why, gracious Queen;
Your sadness in silence full long have I seen,
And much have I marveled! Oh, what can distress
One whom nature and art have united to bless?

QUEEN. 'Tis true, good Fairy, treasures rare are mine;
But though so much I have, yet do I pine
For what I have not. Know you not a gem
Is missing from my royal diadem,
And I would fain restore it? Till replaced
I'm doomed by restless longings to be chased;
But mourn I not thus for itself alone
This missing gem, for by its loss is shown
The absence of some virtue from my breast
That should adorn it. Hence this vague unrest—
These shadows where I should but sunshine see,
These sighs for what I *am* not, but *might* be.

[*Droops her head despondently.*]

So, while my diadem is incomplete
I'll know not happiness. The meteor fleet,
Its counterfeit—gay pleasure—may beguile
Perchance my somber musings for a while;
But till the missing gem restored shall be
Contentment *is* not, *can* not be for me.

FAIRY. Yet do not despair, for you know that our dower,
Our mystical birthright, endows us with power
To penetrate all the recesses of earth,
Discern 'neath the homeliest guises true worth.
Oh then, beloved Queen, can you think that 't is vain
To hope the lost jewel you yet may regain?

QUEEN. Your words bring comfort, and it is indeed
For this I've summoned you. Where'er you lead
The Fairies follow. Go then with your train
Into the land of mortals; hill and plain
Explore; and oh! may gracious Heaven bless
Your search, and give me back my happiness!

FAIRY. Thanks, thanks for your mission! We hear and
obey,
And swiftly and gayly we'll hasten away.
The lily's still chalice no secrets shall hold;
We will traverse the rainbow's fair bridge for its gold;
We will list where the honey bee's humming is heard;
We will catch a low note from the song of the bird.
Far in the dark shade of the forest we'll go;
Fierce winds and soft zephyrs shall tell what they know.
We will stand by the seashore and question the waves
Of the treasures concealed in their deep ocean caves.
We will follow the stars in their devious track;
E'en the hills and the mountains shall answer us back,
And joy shall reign in our bright Fairy land
When, united once more, we before you shall stand.

QUEEN. God speed you then, my Fairies! Even now
My heart feels lighter, for I know not how
Such search can be in vain. Your Fairy power
The language of the stars, the bird, the flower,
The winds, the waves, reveals, and they will speak
And tell the secret that you fain would seek,
If it be known to them. Should it not be!—
Dread thought! What lifelong misery for me!

FAIRY. Nay, my Queen! did I dare, I would e'en chide
you now,
Your fears are so groundless. Chase care from your brow;
List, while to the Fairies your will I convey;
See how gladly they'll listen, how swiftly obey!
And believe, hope, and trust; we are sure to prevail.
When Love leads us onward, oh how can we fail!

[*To the FAIRIES.*

Hearken ye, Fairies all! 't is your Queen's gracious will
That we among mortals a mission shall fill.
To make all resplendent her rare diadem
A jewel is wanting—but one single gem;
Yet so priceless, she ne'er can know happiness more
Till we to her crown can this jewel restore;
And she bids us the uttermost parts of the earth
To wander in search of this gem of great worth.

FAIRIES (*in chorus*).

One and all,

One and all,

We have come
At your call!
Blithe and gay,
Blithe and gay,
Let us then
Haste away,
And the gem,
Priceless gem,
Soon shall grace
Your diadem!

QUEEN. Go then, my loving Fairies, go! nor long
delay

Your glad return. Away! Away!! Away!!!

And be our parting, though it may be long,

E'en as we hope to meet, with dance and song.

[*The QUEEN reclines on her throne, and the FAIRIES dance
and sing, and as the dance ends, go out saying—*

Blithe and gay,
Blithe and gay,
Let us then
Haste away,
And the gem,
Priceless gem,
Soon shall grace
Your diadem.

(*Curtain drops.*)

ACT III.

SCENE—*A Woodland. First FAIRY alone.*

FAIRY FIDELIA. How sweet, oh how sweet it is once
more to stand

'Mid the beautiful scenes of our own Fairy land!

Oh! never the life of a mortal for me—

A Fairy, a gay, blithesome Fairy I'd be!

But if, as I hope, we have borne back the prize

That shall banish the shade that so chillingly lies

On our loved sovereign's brow, we'll be more than content

To forget the long days that in exile we've spent.

She fain *must* be weary of pomp and of state,

To bid me her coming thus here to await

In these simple greenwoods. But her presence alone

Will make them right royal, transform to a throne

The green, mossy turf of this leafy retreat,

Where she shall recline, while we lay at her feet

The treasures we've garnered. But (*listening*) what is that
strain?

'Tis the jubilant song of the glad Fairy train

That comes with her hither. Oh, joy at last!

She is here! and the sad days of parting are past!

[*Enter QUEEN, preceded by the FAIRIES singing and scattering flowers.*]

QUEEN. Welcome! oh, welcome back to Fairy land!

Ofttimes have I repented my command,
And scarce my eager longing could restrain
To call you from your wand'rings home again.
But Heaven be praised! at last they all are o'er,
And your glad presence cheers my heart once more!
But (*eagerly*) tell me—tell me—did you meet success?

FAIRY FIDELIA. 'Tis for you to decide, beloved Queen;
we confess

To the fairest of hopes; for, tho' oft weary, still
The broad earth we've traversed our mission to fill.
And now with your leave we'll present to your eyes
The fruits of our wand'rings; and oh! may the prize
So eagerly sought, by its magical power
Soon banish the clouds o'er your pathway that lower.
First, fair Flower Spirit, I call thee: [*Waves her wand.*
Appear!

And with thy sweet train of rare blossoms draw near.

[*Enter FLOWER SPIRIT with her attendant blossoms.*]

FLOWER SPIRIT. From our far-off mountain home,
At your bidding, we have come,
Gracious Queen;
Through the crowning charm and grace
Of our earthly dwelling place
We have been.
In our leaves are folded up,
As within a jeweled cup,
Sweets untold;

But our dearest magic lies
In a gift that you will prize
 More than gold.
We, though frail and fleeting flowers,
Over many adverse powers
 Have control,
And each bud and blossom fair
Typifies some virtue rare
 Of the soul.
And we fain would bring you "peace;"
Bid the weary strife to cease
 In your breast;
Drive the yearning vague away
That has filled you night and day
 With unrest.
And though sparkling not with gems
Are the royal diadems
 That we weave,
We would twine a crown so fair
That no ling'ring trace of care
 It would leave.
But their treasures first, my Rose,
Then her sisters, would disclose—
 Even now
Garnered sweets they'd fain combine
In the chaplet they would twine
 For your brow.

ROSE. Where the nightingale thrills with his soul-
'trancing strain
The silvery brightness of night,
And, laden with fragrance, the soft zephyrs steal
And fill ev'ry sense with delight;
Where Beauty her spell of enchantment doth weave
From the dawn of the day to its close,
And all that is lovely in harmony blends—
Oh! there is the home of the Rose!
My home! Yes, for me is the nightingale's lay;
My smiles would the soft zephyrs woo,
And the sunbeams enfold me in circlets of gold
And whisper of love to me too;
For of all of the flowers of earth I am queen!
And peerless among them I stand,
E'en as of the Fairies, your Highness, enthroned,
Stands first in this fair Fairy land.
And I am the emblem of love, that we know
Is of all things the life and the breath,
Enriching with Midas-like touch high and low—
Love! older and stronger than death!
What jewel in beauty with me can compare,
Or with love in its richness can vie?
Yet these are the treasures I offer you now—
Oh! pass them not hastily by.
QUEEN. Nay! I will ponder well your gifts, O Rose!
Few indeed could surpass or equal those.

The love you offer stirs and thrills my heart,
Yet not in all its fullness doth impart
The peace I crave. It is a gift—most sweet,
'Tis true—yet *but* a gift, and for complete
Content I must not merely hoard up self,
But rise, through longing, to a nobler self.
Yet love may be the means whereby to rise,
The destined wings to bear me to the skies! [*Pauses.*
I'll think of it, e'en while I lend an ear
Your lovely sisters' sweet discourse to hear.

LILY. Can I, the spotless Lily,
Claim a place beside the Rose
In the cluster rare of blossoms
That your wand'ring Fairies chose
From earth's brightest, fairest gardens,
To delight your honored eyes
And supply the nameless longing
That within your bosom lies?
Everywhere my fragrant chalice
Is the perfect type of grace,
And the purity I emblem
That beholds God face to face;
And if these you fain would mingle
With the jewels of your throne,
They are mine, O Queen! to offer;
Take them, keep them for your own.

QUEEN. O Lily! stainless in a world of sin,
Meet is thy spotlessness to enter in
The heav'nly courts! Oh! gladly would I take
Thy offering; but, alas! it does not make
Peace yet within me! Further must I seek.
But see! another flow'ret waits to speak.

PASSION FLOWER. And I, fair Queen—I am the
Passion Flower!
Called into birth in Calvary's blood-stained hour,
And on my breast—a holy trust—I bear
Its blest regalia. Yes! the cross is there;
The nails—the hammer—e'en the thorny crown
That pierced the Kingly Head and weighed it down;
The scepter reed, the purple that in scorn
They brought the King of Glory to adorn!
I emblem Faith, that attribute divine,
Which brighter than the very stars shall shine
Upon that day of days when God shall make
His jewels up. Faith! that hath power to take
The sting from ev'ry thorn, and, tho' the night
Close darkly around us, lead us to the light;
To bid our stormy passions "peace, be still!"
And with repose our troubled hearts to fill.

QUEEN. Thrice royal is thy crest, O Passion
Flower,
And glorious the faith that is thy dower!
But I must own that still my tortured breast
Is filled with sadness, longing, and unrest.

VIOLET. Then hear me, pray—the Violet!
Though fairer far my sisters, yet
God gives a certain charm and worth
To e'en the lowliest things of earth.
And as *their* beauty and *their* grace
And lofty gifts have found no place
Within your breast, it yet may be
Its slumbering chords shall wake for me.
Half hidden by some leafy screen,
In shaded nooks I'm always seen,
And ere the wand'ring gaze I greet,
Upon the air my perfume sweet
I softly breathe. Humility,
Contentment, find their types in me—
Virtues scarce meet to crown a queen;
But as the moonlight's silvery sheen
Has a still glory of its own
Which noonday skies have scarcely known,
So may these gentle gifts of mine
With sweet effulgence o'er *you* shine.

QUEEN. Alas! my star-eyed Violet—alas!
E'en as the rest, I fain must let you pass;
But think not that your lowly gifts I scorn:
Palace or cot they would alike adorn.
But the dread phantom of my weary hours
Remains, and yields not to your spells, O Flowers!

FLOWER SPIRIT. Then away to Earth again,
 Grieving o'er our mission vain,
 We will go,
 Wafted by the Zephyrs fair
 On the viewless waves of air
 To and fro!

[*Exeunt FLOWER SPIRIT and her train, repeating in chorus:*

Yes! away to Earth again,
 Grieving o'er our mission vain,
 We will go,
 Wafted by the Zephyrs fair
 On the viewless waves of air
 To and fro.

[*The QUEEN reclines with her head drooping in profound dejection. The first FAIRY again approaches and addresses her.*]

FIRST FAIRY. Nay, do not despond, O our Sov'reign!
 for still

Treasures rare and undreamed of await but your will;
 The Orient Spirit, from mountains and waves,
 Has borne off the gems of their fathomless caves,
 And waits but my summons your presence to greet,
 And his costliest jewels to lay at your feet.

[*Waves her wand.*

“Spirit of the Orient!—the far distant main—

Enter, enter, enter; enter with your train!”

[*Enter SPIRIT OF THE ORIENT with his jewels. The FAIRIES greet them with a song.*]

SPIRIT OF THE ORIENT. Treasures I bring
Meet for a king,
Longing to fling
Them all at your feet, Sov'reign Queen!
Dark mountain caves,
Deep ocean waves,
Have for ages their citadels been.
Though fathoms down,
Where tempests frown
And billows crown
Their mystical grottoes with night;
Flashing, their rays
Sparkle and blaze,
Alive and resplendent with light.
And mermaids come,
And Elf and Gnome
Make their weird home
In their marvelous, jeweled retreat;
And Kings have sighed
And fought and died
For the gems I would lay at your feet.

DIAMOND. Yes, I am the Diamond, translucent with light,
And I flash and I sparkle and quiver
Like the far-shining stars on the brow of the night,
Like the heaven-crowned glaciers that dazzle the sight,
Like the sunbeams that shimmer bewild'ringly bright

As they glance and they gleam on the river.
All the hues of the rainbow are 'prisoned in me,
Locked up in their beauty forever;
Ever fresh, ever changeful my splendor shall be,
Like the varying waves of the beautiful sea
Or the clouds that at sunset float over the lea
From the "*Now*" to the shores of the "*Never*."
"Excelsior!" proudly I bear on my crest:
As the type of perfection I'm given;
On the forehead of monarchs I fittingly rest,
Or blaze into radiance on royalty's breast,
Adorning and crowning Earth's highest and best
With the nameless resplendence of heaven.

QUEEN (*shading her eyes as if dazzled*). Ah, matchless
Diamond! you dazzle me indeed,
But splendor does not give me what I need.

PEARL. Then, if your Majesty craves not for splendor,
Hear me—the Pearl!
Down where the sea murmurs holy and tender,
Safe from the whirl,
Rousing the sailor from dream-haunted pillow,
Filling the tempest and tossing the billow,
Seeking to hurl
All in the foam of its striving and seething,
In a dim grotto where silence is breathing,

Long have I slept,
While ages kept
Watch as they crept
Over the Pearl.

Meanwhile my translucent beauty was forming,
Hid from all eyes;

One day above all the strife and the storming
Destined to rise.

Pure as the light from the star-lit skies streaming,
Holy and calm as Eternity's beaming,

Come I at last,
Longing to cast
Into the past
All your vain sighs.

QUEEN. Oh, priceless Pearl! the ocean's purest gem,
Why canst not thou complete my diadem?
Fain would I give to thee the vacant place
Ages have formed and fitted thee to grace,
But that I may not. Something whispers "No!
For what you seek still farther must you go!"

EMERALD. Mayhap to me, the Emerald,
It may be given
To bring to you the boon denied
So long by Heaven;
Not as the Diamond may
With a prismatic ray,

Gone while you bid it stay—

Not thus I shine !

Changeless, *my* constant light,

Steadfast and true and bright,

Mortals have chosen me

Emblem and type to be

Of Truth divine !

What surer anchor could you crave

From ev'ry shock

Than Truth, which e'en when tempests rave

Stands like a rock—

Truth, though a Pharos set,

Guiding Earth's wand'ers, yet

Shineth in Heaven

E'en as the central stone

Of the Eternal Throne,

Where, all our doubtings past,

Sweetly to us at last

Peace shall be given !

QUEEN. Wretched am I ! The gems of earth and sea

Bring not my lost contentment back to me !

Orient Spirit ! e'en *your* treasures rare

Have failed, and naught seems left me but despair.

SPIRIT OF THE ORIENT. Then we will go,

Silently go,

Sadly and slow

Back to our caverns again :

Hoping to you

Happiness true

May come though our charms are vain !

[*Exeunt SPIRIT OF THE ORIENT and train.*
[*The First FAIRY speaks cheerfully to the QUEEN.*]

FAIRY. Not yet are the fruits of our wanderings spent :

For fear Earth's resources might fail us, we bent

Our devious course to the broad realms of Thought,

And there 'mid the lore of all ages we sought,

And garnered the fittest to charm and to please—

Hist'ry, Poetry, Fiction—and now, first of these,

[*Waves her wand.*

“I summon thee, Hist'ry! Let the days of the Past

O'er the days of the Present their witchery cast!”

[*Enter HISTORY, holding in her hand the lamp of the PAST.*
She speaks and then evokes the shades of the great, who,
one by one, pass silently in review before the QUEEN.]

HISTORY. I, History, have an honored task to fill :

Guard from oblivion Monarchs at whose will

Millions have trembled; rescue from the dust

Of ages names heroic—sacred trust!

Immortal names that perished not with breath,

But live in me, triumphant over death.

I bear the mystic lantern of the Past,

And now its dim and shadowy light will cast

Upon the phantom forms that one by one

Shall pass before you. Deeds that they have done

You may do likewise. Virtues, made their own,
Make yours, and bring the peace you have not known.
And first, brave, noble, gentle, tender, true,
Fair type of womanhood, I summon you,
"Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi!" See!
She comes—her jewels clinging to her knee.

[*CORNELIA enters and passes slowly across the stage, her children clinging to her.*]

Now, "Joan of Arc," who by Divine command
Assumed the warrior's garb to save her land.

[*Enter JOAN OF ARC, passing like CORNELIA.*]

Next, "Mary," Scotland's fair, ill-fated Queen,
Nearing the scaffold with a royal mien.

[*Enter MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS, etc.*]

"Marg'ret of Anjou," noble mother, wife,
Braving the foes that seek her young son's life.

[*Enter MARGARET OF ANJOU, etc.*]

"Zenobia," Palmyra's pride! She deigns
No tears, no sighs, tho' captive and in chains.

[*Enter ZENOBIA, etc.*]

But I will pause, tho' from my honored scroll
An endless pageant I might still unroll,
For waits my sister, Fiction, from her store
A mental feast of rich delight to pour.

FICTION. Although not like Hist'ry, custodian of ages,
Yet still in my ranks mingle scholars and sages,

And many fair blossoms from Thought's lovely garden,
Expanded to beauty, own me for their warden.
Dickens, Thackeray, Scott, other priests of my altar,
Whose great minds knew never a pause or a falter,
The fairest and best of their limitless treasure
Shall pour at your feet, Fairy Queen, for your pleasure.
Fiction fain should instruct, entertain, or give warning,
Paint Vice to be shunned, Virtue meet for adorning;
So, all varying forms will I call up in review,
And if these soul glances should chance to restore you
The secret of Peace, we will, with *one* voice,
Unite with the Fairies to praise and rejoice!

[*Enter* PEGOTTY.]

PEGOTTY. Pegotty! beg pardon! But my name that be.
You 've heard of Master Davy and of me,
And how I loved him and cared not a shillin'
To marry Barkis, tho' he was so "*willin'*."
Bless me! I 've hugged, and kissed, and squeezed the boy
Until my very buttons burst with joy!
Indeed, they 're always poppin' more or less—
(I think my heart is bigger than my dress).
Those murderin' Murdstones, how I hate them still!
I can't forgive them—and I never will.
They drove my child away to starve and sin,
But good Miss Betsy Trotwood took him in,
And these two eyes have lived to see him stand

Among the Lords and Ladies of the land.

I'm proud to say it! (*holding her side*) that's a dreadful strain!

I'll leave before the buttons pop again. [*Exit* PEGOTTY.

[*Enter* ROMOLA.]

ROMOLA. Romola—surviving Hope, and Love, and Truth,

Life dead for her, e'en in the flush of youth,
Her heart's best treasures trampled in the dust,
Deceived, betrayed where she had learned to trust—
Still lives to prove it is (Faith tells us why)
“Not all of life to live, nor death to die.”

The path of duty brings its own content,
Life dead for us may be for others spent;
And they who nobly, grandly can ignore
The blow that kills them, rising bravely o'er
Their human weakness till they grow so strong
They give back blessing in return for wrong,
Chastened by sorrow, may become sublime,
Their spirit wings unfolding ere their time.

[*Exit* ROMOLA. *The* QUEEN, *looking yearningly after her, exclaims:*

QUEEN. Oh, Romola! a hidden chord thy noble life
Awakes that seems to drown this ceaseless strife
Within me, and altho' I may not dare
To call it hope, it lessens my despair.

[*Enter little* NELL.]

LITTLE NELL. Please, your Majesty, I'm "Little Nell."
I'm hunting Grandfather; pray can you tell
Where he has wandered? All the bright day long
We've roamed the green fields, listening to the song
Of the clear brook that gaily flowed along,
Or picking pretty flowers from the grass
Because they looked so glad to see us pass.
I left him but just now a little while
That he might rest himself upon the stile,
And when I came back he was gone. But, hear!
He calls me: "Yes, Grandfather dear,
I'm coming." (*Looking up.*) Oh! I'm glad the moon's so
bright,
For we have far to journey yet to-night. [*Exit little NELL.*

[*Enter BECKY SHARPE.*]

BECKY SHARPE. Becky Sharpe, so I'm called, and my
nature and name
Are all sharp together: they are one and the same.
Scissors, razors can't even compare with my tongue,
For it riddles the old and it riddles the young—
(Of course in a ladylike, innocent way)
For I can be sweet as the flowers of May
And charmingly flatter, and simper, and smile,
And give a sly thrust (all *sub rosa*) meanwhile.
Then I've quite a volley of *ahs!* and *oh dears!*
And floods, perfect floods of bewildering tears!
For in Vanity Fair people live by their wits

(Mine have served me in time to make many good hits),
Though I made one too many and found it no fun,
When instead of the father I married the son.
Yet many good people who cavil and carp
In holiest horror at poor Becky Sharpe,
And set up for models to copy and trust,
Are, like Sodom's apples, all ashes and dust.

[*Exit* BECKY SHARPE.]

[*Enter* GRETCHEN.]

GRETCHEN. Oh, yes, I'm Gretchen, Rip Van Winkle's
wife.

"Where's he?" As usual, drinking for dear life!
"Don't count 'em!" Count 'em, indeed! Of late
There'd be no room to count 'em on the slate.
"May you live long and prosper!" Well, I think
That is a pretty toast for *him* to drink!
I *never* scold, that is, I don't begin it,
But oh! if I could have him here a minute.

[*Exit* GRETCHEN.]

FICTION. But Poetry comes, scatt'ring fragrance and
flowers,
Entrancing the soul with her magical powers.
The Laurels *she* twines for my scholars and sages,
And sheds deathless glory o'er History's ages;
And beautiful visions and sweetest of measure
Would she call forth e'en now for your Majesty's pleasure,

[*Enter* POETRY.]

POETRY. Ah, yes, fair Queen! my slumb'ring lyre,
 Silent full long, I gladly take,
 And songs alive with Heav'nly fire
 Its sweetest chords for you shall wake :
 Songs of the East—the land of story—
 Your ear shall woo, your heart shall thrill ;
 The West—the sunset land of glory—
 Its crimson light around them still ;
 The North—in ruder measure flowing,
 Waking a bolder, louder strain ;
 The South—where flowers are ever blowing,
 Breathing of softness once again.

[*Characters from POETRY pass in tableaux across the stage
 while the SPIRIT OF POETRY is speaking.*]

QUEEN. Oh! rich and rare the priceless treasures
 wrought

Within the mines, the secret mines of thought!
 But they have stirred and thrilled my very soul
 In vain. Not yet the Demon yields control,
 Insatiate, cruel Demon of unrest,
 That with despair and anguish rends my breast!
 It *can not, shall not* be that it is meant
 That thus my long, long Future must be spent!
 “Go, go, my willing Fairies, go once more,
 Some strange, some undiscovered realms explore;
 Go! ere I, fainting, send my prayer on high
 To beg a mortal's privilege—to die!”

FAIRY FIDELIA. We will go, though already we've
searched long and well,
And whither to wander we scarcely can tell:
Perhaps 'yond the stars, in some far unknown sphere,
May be hidden the secret denied to us here,
And pitying angels will point us the way
And bid you despair not, but hope, trust, and pray.
But come, my good Fairies, no longer delay,
And let us e'en sing as we hasten away,
Though raise we no joyous nor jubilant strain
Until, all triumphant, we come back again!

[*Eccunt omnes.* FAIRIES *singing.*]

ACT IV.

SCENE—*A Woodland.* STAR OF BETHLEHEM and the ANGEL OF CHARITY *in colloquy.*

- STAR. Gentle Spirit, here we meet
CHARITY. In this sheltered, calm retreat,
STAR. Where Earth's turmoil and its din
CHARITY. Can not, may not enter in.
STAR. All around us starry eyes
CHARITY. Look down from the far-off skies,
STAR. Stars—the same that shone so bright
CHARITY. On that consecrated night
STAR. When our Lord a child became,
CHARITY. Throwing wide in mercy's name
STAR. Heaven's portals closed by sin;
CHARITY. Bidding all to enter in!
STAR. Gladly through the midnight still
CHARITY. Rang the anthem of "Good Will!"
STAR. "Glory unto God!" and then
CHARITY. "Peace!" oh, "peace on earth to men!"
STAR. A stable for the Lord of Grace!
CHARITY. Made a palace by His face!
STAR. Poor and lowly Bethlehem,
CHARITY. Crowned with royal diadem.
STAR. Starry hosts that night I led
CHARITY. While I watched the Infant's bed.

- STAR. I was sent the Kings to guide :
CHARITY. Yes! they left their wealth and pride,
STAR. Hast'ning Jesus to adore,
CHARITY. At his feet their gifts to pour.
STAR. Shining still my jeweled train,
CHARITY. Ushers Christmas in again !
STAR. Fitting 't is that *we* should meet
CHARITY. This high festival to greet ;
STAR. Charity ! in whose sweet name
CHARITY. God a little Babe became,
STAR. Still should rule the Christmas feast.
CHARITY. And the Star that in the East
STAR. Guide and sentinel was set,
CHARITY. Be a guide and beacon yet.
STAR. But the Ages as they pass
CHARITY. Take not with them grief, alas !
STAR. And Earth now as many woes,
CHARITY. Pains, and cares as ever knows.
STAR. Fortune smiles upon so few :
CHARITY. Blessed are the poor, 't is true,
STAR. And God loves them none the less,
CHARITY. Yet we long to soothe distress,
STAR. And tears most my own bespeak
CHARITY. When they flow down childhood's cheek.
STAR. Long my vigil have I kept,
CHARITY. I've watched, too, when others slept,
STAR. O'er a little one so mild—

- CHARITY. It is Elsie—lovely child!
- STAR. Yes, 't is Elsie! Then you know
- CHARITY. What has caused her tears to flow :
- STAR. Since her father is no more
- CHARITY. Ah! the wolf is at their door,
- STAR. And this Christmas there will be
- CHARITY. In their cot no Christmas tree ;
- STAR. Yet with simple faith she prayed—
- CHARITY. Yes, I know, "Christ-child," she says,
- STAR. "Please bring us a tree! Indeed
- CHARITY. There are many things we need!"
- STAR. Oh! could you some gentle breast
- CHARITY. Move to grant the child's request,
- STAR. I would go to point the way
- CHARITY. With your brightest, purest ray.
- STAR. God would prize the deed as done
- CHARITY. To Him through this little one ;
- STAR. Show how blessed 't is to give—
- CHARITY. Far more blest than to receive.
- STAR. But alas! in times like these
- CHARITY. Hearts are locked by "golden keys ;"
- STAR. Closed to mercy, hard and cold,
- CHARITY. "Ope they but at touch of gold."
- STAR. Yet God shortens not His hand :
- CHARITY. Hardest hearts can He command :
- STAR. From self's iron fetters free,
- CHARITY. Ope they at *His* Sesame!

STAR. And this time, to childhood given,

CHARITY. Of all times is nearest Heaven!

STAR. Then, oh! let us not despair:

CHARITY. Good lies hidden ev'rywhere,

STAR. And some loving, gen'rous mind

CHARITY. Where we hope least may we find.

STAR (*listening*). But a distant song I hear!

CHARITY. List! There must be Fairies near?

STAR. Yes! they come. Shall we away?

CHARITY. Nay! to greet them, let us stay.

[*Enter FAIRIES singing, but slowly and sweetly, not joyously.*]

FIRST FAIRY (*starting in surprise*). What vision is this?
can it be unawares

We have brought to the haunts of the Angels our cares?

O, Spirit of Light! on whose forehead doth shine

That wonderful Star with its radiance divine,

And you whose fair presence such restfulness brings

That Peace seems to dwell 'neath the shade of your wings,

Who are you? Whence came you? Is Heaven your home?

And why have you left it the sad earth to roam?

Speak! but oh! forbid us not here to remain

Awhile to repose from our wanderings vain.

STAR. I am the Star of Bethlehem!

CHARITY. I, Charity, God's crowning gem!

STAR. Heaven is indeed our home,

CHARITY. But to earth we've pitying come,

STAR. Man to lead from night to day,

CHARITY. Soothe the sorrows of his way ;
STAR. For in Heaven we heard the chime
CHARITY. Of the blessed Christmas time ;
STAR. And the Savior undefiled,
CHARITY. Who himself became a child
STAR. One far Christmas, ages past,
CHARITY. Earthward loving glances cast,
STAR. And He told us of Earth's woe
CHARITY. And the bitter tears that flow,
STAR. And to man He bade us still
CHARITY. Bear His message of "Good Will,"
STAR. For no saddened notes belong
CHARITY. To the joyous Christmas song.
FIRST FAIRY. Can it be, that at last shall our wander-
ings cease ?

Do you know, then, some heavenly secret of peace?
Oh ! tell us, bright Spirits, for sadly we rove
In search of that boon for the Queen that we love.

STAR. God alone can give, not we !
CHARITY. But His messengers we be,
STAR. And His mercy is sublime.
CHARITY. 'T is His chosen Christmas time ;
STAR. Harks He loving to each call,
CHARITY. Watching tenderly o'er all.
STAR. Not for hers but others' woe
CHARITY. Let your Sov'reign's tears o'erflow ;
STAR. Let her from her boundless store

CHARITY. Help the needy and the poor,
STAR. Unto hearts surcharged with grief
CHARITY. Whisper comfort and relief,
STAR. And the blessings she has shed
CHARITY. Soon shall crown her own fair head ;
STAR. Bid her spirit's conflict cease,
CHARITY. Fill her with God's own sweet peace,
STAR. Peace that nothing ever may
CHARITY. Blight, destroy, or take away !
FAIRY FIDELIA. That peace, holy spirits, we seek :
but alas !

In our bright Fairy land days all sunnily pass ;
No grief-stricken, needy, or poor do we know,
No sad, breaking hearts whence the bitter tears flow.
In all its fair limits there is not a breast
Where even the shadow of sorrow doth rest,
Save that of our Sov'reign, the Queen of the land,
And we can not her anguish and pain understand.
To the suff'ring she'd minister gladly we know,
But tell us, to find them, oh ! where shall she go ?

STAR. 'T is because the God of Heaven
CHARITY. To your gracious Queen has given
STAR. Such a high and noble mind
CHARITY. That content she can not find
STAR. In the splendors of a throne
CHARITY. Lavished on herself alone.
STAR. I can guide her to the door

CHARITY. Of the needy and the poor,

STAR. I can show her many homes

CHARITY. Where no sunshine ever comes ;

STAR. Thorny paths her Fairy powers

CHARITY. May bestrew with glowing flowers,

STAR. Childish hearts whose early tears

CHARITY. Shall be dried as she appears.

STAR. There is one, a little girl,

CHARITY. Lovely as the ocean pearl,

STAR. To whose once contented home

CHARITY. Sorrow dark and chill has come :

STAR. And this gladsome Christmas time

CHARITY. With its merry, merry chime

STAR. Makes the shadows darker grow,

CHARITY. Makes her tears the faster flow,

STAR. For this year no Christmas tree

CHARITY. In her cottage home there'll be,

STAR. And although the wide, wide earth

CHARITY. Echoes with the Savior's birth,

STAR. Poverty and grief, akin,

CHARITY. Will not let the echoes in.

FIRST FAIRY. Oh, joy! Will you hasten with us to
our Queen,

To lead her glad steps where the child you have seen ?

The dark, brooding shades at her coming shall flee,

How sweet, how ineffably sweet it will be

To wipe the sad tears from the innocent eyes

And fill them instead with a gladsome surprise !
The low cottage room with resplendence adorn ;
And when she awakes on the fair Christmas morn
To dazzle her eyes with a wonderful tree,
Such as she ne'er fancied or dreamt there could be !
Then come—will you come ? Oh ! we long to depart,
Glad tidings to bear to our dear Sov'reign's heart :
Her grief, her despair, and her longings are past,
The secret of Peace is discovered at last !
Scatt'ring blessings for others, herself shall be blest,
And happiness evermore reign in her breast.

STAR. Yes ! we'll gladly, hand in hand,

CHARITY. Go with you to Fairy land ;

STAR. Lead you and your Fairy Queen

CHARITY. Where you can—yourselves unseen—

STAR. On the little maiden gaze ;

CHARITY. Note her simple, childish ways,

STAR. Cares ill suited to her years,

CHARITY. Childlike faith and patient tears,

STAR. Ere your joyful surprise

CHARITY. Burst upon her wand'ring eyes.

[*Exeunt omnes. Curtain falls.*]

ACT V.

SCENE—DAME URSULE'S *cottage*. ELSIE, *placing the chairs in order; sits down and listlessly takes up her knitting.*

ELSIE. At last, at last my household tasks are done!
Mother left word for me to take a run,
When they were finished, down the mountain side;
But oh! I could not run, e'en if I tried.
She will not care if I sit still a bit,
A round or two upon this sock to knit.
I hope that I can sell them at the Fair;
I've often seen the people buy them there;
And oh! we want so many, many things!
No bread!—no meal! Unless poor mother brings
Some from the town, there will not be a bite
Of supper, e'en for Hilda dear to-night.
Poor mother!—I may call her poor indeed!
She knows not how my very heart doth bleed
To see her smile and make us eat, while she
Pretends she is not hungry. Ah! dear me!
If rich folks knew how hard 't is to be poor,
They'd never send a beggar from their door.

And oh! how gay we were this time last year!
Father was with us then—and Christmas near!

Dear father!

[*Sobs—then wipes her eyes.*]

But I'm glad he went away
And did not live to see this sad, sad day.
He's with the angels in God's home so fair,
And I am sure he's praying for us there.

I wonder who'll buy Brindle! Oh! to sell
Her is too hard! I could not say farewell,
When mother and Hilda drove her off to-day—
I could not look—I turned my head away.
I know now why our talk about the tree
Made mother angry; but though it may be
Foolish, I e'en now sometimes think that still
Perhaps we'll have one; that the Christ-child will
Tell some good Fairy what we want, and she
Will pity us and bring our Christmas tree.
I've prayed so hard, that surely it does seem
That God must hear; and then I had a dream—
Oh! such a dream, last night! 'Twas Christmas Eve
As it is now, and I sat down to grieve,
When in the distance sweetest sounds I heard—
Sweeter than ever sang the summer bird—
And suddenly a flood of glorious light
Filled all the room; the walls stretched out of sight;
A star-crowned angel led a shining band
Of lovely Fairies just from Fairy land,
Who danced 'round mother, Hilda, and 'round me,
And as I turned to look I saw a tree—

Oh! *such* a tree! Its branches reached so high
 It seemed to me they almost touched the sky.
 It was ablaze with candles blue, and green,
 Red, yellow—oh! the like I'd never seen!
 And glittering balls of silver and of gold,
 And hung as full as ever it could hold
 With cakes, fruits, candies—beautiful to see—
 And Sunday suits for Hilda and for me,
 And mother too—hoods, shawls, and all complete,
 And buckled shoes so pretty and so neat,
 And books and dolls—and— [Pauses and listens.

Steps without I hear—

Mother and Hilda!

[*Springs up eagerly as DAME URSULE and HILDA enter, and, kissing them, says:*

Welcome, mother dear!

[*Hands her a chair, and takes the 'kerchief from her head.*
 You look so pale! I'll lay your 'kerchief down;
 There! rest before we talk about the town.

HILDA. Elsie! Brindle is not sold after all!
 We drove her back; she's in her own old stall!

ELSIE. Oh! I'm so glad! But how is this? I fear—
 Mother, can we afford to keep her here?

DAME. No! no! but then I found that I could get
 So little for her. I'll not sell her yet:
 Perhaps at Easter they will give me more;
 But oh! we'll have to part with her before,

Or starve. E'en now we've neither meal nor bread,
And supperless to-night must go to bed.

[*Leans her head on the table and sobs.* ELSIE, *putting her arms around her, says:*

ELSIE. Nay, mother, nay! don't cry so; you forget.
Brindle is not sold—we've her nice milk yet!
Hilda and I will take a great big drink,
And then of bread I'm sure we need not think;
And what may chance to-morrow, who can tell?
'Tis Christmas day. And mother dear—ah, well!

[*Chokes back a sob.*

God, who takes care e'en of the little bird,
Who tells us, if we pray we shall be heard,
Won't surely let *us* starve when all the earth
Is glad and joyful at the Christ-child's birth.
But— Listen! listen! Mother—Hilda—hear!

HILDA. How sweet! What can it be? Oh! sister
dear!

ELSIE. 'Tis heavenly music!—Oh! my dream!—
my dream!

It is the Fairies!—Light begins to gleam!
Rise, mother, rise! Now you shall weep no more,
God's angels are already at our door!

[*The scene shifts behind them as they stand gazing, disclosing a brilliantly lighted space, in the center of which stands a gorgeous Christmas Tree. The Fairy QUEEN and her train, preceded by the STAR OF BETHLEHEM and the ANGEL OF CHARITY, enter singing, and, joining hands, form a circle, and dance around them.*]

ELSIE. My Star—my Star—so beautiful and bright,
That has so often come to me at night!

And the dear Fairies!

HILDA. And the Tree! the Tree!
The dolls—the shoes with buckles—sister, see!

DAME. Thank God! thank God! I'll never doubt
again,

Nor think that earnest prayer can be in vain.

[As the dance ends, the Fairy train groups in the background, leaving the QUEEN and the STAR OF BETHLEHEM in the center of the stage, with the FAIRY FIDELIA and the ANGEL OF CHARITY on either side of them—ELSIE to the right of the ANGEL, and DAME URSULE and HILDA to the left of the FAIRY. ELSIE advances and kneels before the QUEEN and the STAR.]

ELSIE. O Star! my beautiful, my Guiding Star!
Dear Fairy Queen! come with your train so far—
I can't find words my loving thanks to say
For all the joy you've brought to us to-day.
You are so rich—so great—so mighty! We
Have nothing fit to offer, as you see;
But mayhap 't will be sweet to you to know
What bitter tears through you have ceased to flow,
And how you've brought us in our sorest need
A Christmas, merry Christmas feast indeed;
And God hears His dear children's prayers, I know,
For He's heard mine, as all these blessings show,
And every night while yet I live I'll pray
To Him for you. "Dear Jesus!" I will say,

“ Bless the dear Star, the Queen, and let them be
As happy always as they’ve just made me.”

DAME URSULE. The prayers—not of the fatherless
alone—

A widow’s prayers shall also be your own.

QUEEN. Good Dame—dear children, say no more.

To you

My thanks—my earnest thanks—are rather due ;
For though the teeming earth, the sky, the main,
And e’en Thought’s mighty and exhaustless train
Their richest treasures lavished to restore
My lost content, ’t was only at your door
I laid my burden down, forever freed,
And felt the sweets of Peace were mine indeed !
O Charity, blest angel ! in my breast
Remain forevermore a cherished guest !
And thou, O Star !—bright Star of Bethlehem !
Thou only canst complete my diadem !
Earth’s brightest, purest gems no longer shine
Beside *thy* light, eternal and divine.

STAR. Be that light then yours, O Queen !

CHARITY. Be your spirit e’er serene ;

STAR. For God’s blessing you have earned

CHARITY. And His golden lesson learned :

STAR. Unto others e’er to do

CHARITY. As you’d have them do to you.

STAR. But with mortals joy may

CHARITY. Soon take wings and fly away.

STAR. Let us o'er this cottage cast

CHARITY. Charm so potent that 't will last,

STAR. And our friends with gifts endow

CHARITY. For the future as for now.

STAR. Light in darkest hours I'll give ;

CHARITY. Love is mine—in peace to live.

QUEEN. Want ne'er again shall enter at their door,
And they shall live in plenty evermore.

FIRST FAIRY. I too would give something ; they
never shall know

The tears that for mortals so often must flow.

DAME. We have no words to thank you, tho' we try,

ELSIE. But we'll ask God to do so from on high.

STAR. And His angels bright and fair

CHARITY. Unto Him shall waft your prayer.

QUEEN. Already am I thanked. I've learned, to give
Is blessed, far more blest than to receive.

FIRST FAIRY. Then let us away, for the bright
Christmas morn

Already begins the fair sky to adorn ;

But a pean we'll sing, as we journey afar,

To the bright *Star of Bethlehem*, beautiful Star!

[*Exeunt FAIRIES, etc., singing.*

(*Curtain falls.*)



THE LAST SHALL BE FIRST,

OR

THE MISSION OF THE FLOWERS.

A DRAMA IN ONE ACT.



CHARACTERS.

QUEEN FLORA,

ROSE,

JAPONICA,

GERANIUM,

FLORIST,

LAUREL,

MAGNOLIA,

VIOLET,

SUNBEAMS AND ZEPHYRS.



THE LAST SHALL BE FIRST,

OR

THE MISSION OF THE FLOWERS.

SCENE—*Flora's Bower.*

FLORIST (*leaning disconsolately on his spade*). No flowers! no flowers! My labor has been vain,
Not e'en a bud to cheer my toil and pain;
I've tried all arts that ever florists knew,
And worked as hard as any man could do:
Yet not a sprig! Well, I have done my best;
And since to *work* is useless I may *rest* (*sigh*).

[*Enter FLORA.*]

FLORA. What now, my friend! your busy hands
are still,
Your spade rests idly on the ground 't would till,
And though I listened as I passed along
I heard no echo of your wonted song.
Look up! explain your unaccustomed grief,
And Flora's power, perchance, may bring relief.

FLORIST (*hopelessly*). Thanks! But I must entreat
your pardon ere

I pour into your ear my tale of care :
I should have sprung your coming steps to meet,
Your honored presence been the first to greet,
But when the distant Zephyrs breathed your name
I could but hang my head in grief and shame,
For not a single bud, a single flower,
Have I to deck Queen Flora's sylvan bower.

FLORA. Is this your grief? Then let your honest
heart

Be sad no more : well have you done your part,
And much I marvel that these haunted bowers
Have whispered not "the mission of the flowers."
Longing to test the lovely blossoms' worth,
I scattered all abroad upon the earth,
And bade them wander till the fervid ray
Of blooming summer shone across their way.

FLORIST (*joyously*). And this is June! Their wanderings must be o'er,
And you will give me back my flowers once more.
My flowers, my dream by night, my thought by day!
Fair Queen, recall them, bid them not delay.

FLORA (*listening*.) Hark! Borne the echoing breeze
along,
Methinks e'en now I hear their distant song!

[*Waving her wand and turning to the wood.*

Sunbeams and Zephyrs, ever ling'ring near,
Flora awaits ye—rise! appear! appear!

[*Enter SUNBEAMS and ZEPHYRS singing. The song is ended, and FLORA advances, saying:*

Welcome, bright sisters, joyous and free!
Shadows and gloom in you fair presence flee.
Haste, haste away on your devious track,
Seek out our flow'rets, bring them all back;
Long have they wandered; let them once more
Gladden the haunts where they blossomed of yore.

[*Exit SUNBEAMS and ZEPHYRS.*

FLORIST (*earnestly*). Blest be their errand. As I see
them pass

And mark their lightsome shadows on the grass,
My heart beats high, the clouds forsake my brow,
My weary toil is all forgotten now!
To see once more this garden green and fair,
Gemmed with the earth-stars God has planted there,
Were joy indeed! Oh! waft them quickly home!
List the dim echoes. Queen, they come! they come!

[*Singing is heard in the distance and gradually draws near. The FLOWERS enter, preceded by the SUNBEAMS and ZEPHYRS.*]

FLORA (*addressing the FLOWERS*). Hail, lovely wand'ers! whither have ye strayed,
And whence so long your coming have delayed?
How sped your mission? Did you leave behind
The sweet perfume of gentle deeds and kind?

ROSE. Our mission, honored Flora, we have filled
In varied scenes and haunts, as you had willed ;
But a dispute upon our homeward way
Arose and caused this troublesome delay.

FLORIST (*aside in sad surprise*). Dispute! My flowers!
Ah, do they blend no more
In peace their beauties as they did of yore?

FLORA (*astonished*). Dispute, but how? What jealous
hand has flung
Discord and strife my cherished plants among?

LAUREL (*holding a wreath in her hand*). Nay! look
not on us all so gravely down,
For blossoms can not live 'neath Flora's frown ;
A golden Sunbeam, lightly straying past,
Into our midst this fairy chaplet cast,
And, laughing gayly, said, "This crown shall press
Her brow whose queenly right you all confess."
I, deathless "Laurel," claimed it as *my* due ;
The "Rose," presumptuous, needs must claim it too ;
"Japonica," "Magnolia" bolder grown,
And e'en "Geranium" claimed it for her own,
Until I thought e'en the "Vi'let" might dare
Her rustic charms with *ours* to compare.

[*Handing the wreath to FLORA.*

The envied chaplet we to you confide,
Content that *you* the question should decide.

FLORA. So let it be: the trust I will accept—
Ah! would that Envy's pinion ne'er had swept
Your op'ning hearts! In this stern world of ours
War hath full scope: it might have spared my flowers.
But in the presence of these Zephyrs fair
And the Sunbeams, shining as the name they bear,
And this true friend, who's known you long and well,
Each of her mission, good or ill, shall tell;
And when we've weighed each gentle deed with care,
'T is ours to say *which* shall the chaplet wear.
Begin you first, my Rose, my beauteous Rose,
We wait the tale your dewy lips disclose.

ROSE. Then I must lead you backward to the day
Long distant, when you sped us on our way:
Wand'ring awhile along the dusty road,
I turned me soon where waving branches showed
More genial haunts, and carelessly I strayed,
But paused at length where silv'ry fountains played
Upon an emerald strand; around, above,
The blue skies bent in reverence and love,
And from a crystal palace, decked with care,
Delicious perfumes wafted on the air.
Entranced, I drew me near the charmed place:
The crystal walls were miracles of grace,
And loving festoons of each clinging vine
'Round marble columns did luxuriant twine.
The distant fountains played their silver chime,

The garnered sweets from many a far-off clime
Diffused their fragrance; and while yet I gazed
In still delight, enchanted and amazed,
A murmur rose from many a flow'ry bell—
“Stay! Stay, fair sister! Ever with us dwell.”
Methought no Eden have I deemed more fair,
“My home shall be among these flow'rets rare.”
So in their queenly ranks I took my place,
And ev'ry day in beauty grew, and grace.
But few came thither; I would be admired,
And of this sweet monotony I tired.
At length, one happy morn, a stranger came;
I listened and I heard him speak my name,
And as he paused our flow'ry ranks beside
I raised my head in all my blushing pride;
He looked! he smiled! said he, “This beauteous rose,
Queen of the flowers, shall my love disclose!”
And ere the noontide sun had kissed away
The sparkling hoar frost on the ground that lay,
Within the boudoir of a maiden fair
I bore the ardent lover's voiceless prayer.
Bent the bright face above me with a glow
Than which my inmost leaves no deeper know,
And glancing fearful at the thought confessed,
My op'ning petals to her lips she pressed.

* * * * *

Then peerless, e'en amidst the rich and great,

An honored guest within the halls of state,
Deemed meet to tell this honeyed tale of love,
Exalted all the rarest flowers above,
Behold me, Flora, and pray tell me now,
Is not the chaplet fittest for *my* brow?

FLORA. Not yet! not yet! your sisters wait their
turn;

Ere we decide, *their* merits we must learn.

FLORIST. Alas! my Rose, alas! that withering pride
Should blight the charms that nature has supplied.

LAUREL. Thanks, honored Flora! that the wily Rose,
With all the flowery eloquence she knows,
Hath not already lured you to decide
Hers is the crown for which we all have tried.
I, storied Laurel, may not boast the grace
Or glowing beauty of her pretty face;
Such paltry charms *I* need not, nor desire,
I climb where proudest Rose may not aspire.
On hist'ry's brightest page is writ my name,
I wreath the Temple of immortal Fame,
With deathless glory crown the victor's brow
And deck the throne where e'en the great must bow;
Or in a softer mood with winning grace
My fadeless green on poet's head I place.
Nor have I idle been since that fair day
We left these shades in devious haunts to stray;
Shunning the highways, first I took me where,

✱

In dingy attic, comfortless and bare,
A pallid writer burned the midnight flame.
"Alas!" cried he, "the Laurel wreath of Fame!
In vain I court it! I shall live my day—
And then, forgot, unnoticed pass away!"
But as I lingered, listening for more,
A radiant form passed in the open door;
"Joy, joy!" she cried, "success has crowned your lays,
And ev'ry tongue is teeming with your praise!"
Smiles lit the brow where gloom and care had been,
And bending low I crowned it with my green.
My errant footsteps next we ling'ring trace
Where artist fingers waken forms of grace,
And here once more, where gloom and care I find,
I leave my laurels and my smiles behind.
Nor was this all: for echoing afar
I heard the distant mutterings of war!
Stern war a wider scope my powers would yield:
I sped me onward to the battle-field.
Sad was the sight! but recked I not the dead,
Unwept, unhonored in their gory bed!
On, where conq'ring banners streamed in air
I flew, and hung my greenest laurels there.
What though the darkest deeds of crime and blood
Bedimmed my hero? Conqueror he stood!
And when he cried, "Forth with the burning brand!
Let not a palace or a hovel stand

In all this conquered country ! Houseless turn
The widows and orphans of the foe you spurn ! ”
My fair young leaves did wither not nor bow
Above the darkened but victorious brow.
And when I say the order was obeyed,
His word a desert of an Eden made,
And I alone in this triumphant hour
Did crown his brow of might, his hand of power,
You ’ll surely yield the queenly right is mine
To wear the wreath the golden beam did twine.

FLORA. Alas ! proud Laurel, that your leaves should
bear

Such warlike traces on their beauty rare.
Not this, I fear, the sovereignty we seek ;
But, sweet Magnolia, we would hear you speak.

MAGNOLIA. Within that sunny clime where war
and blood

Unchecked have poured their desolating flood,
I found a home when first you bade me rove
From the dim cloisters of this shaded grove.
Fair was the cottage that I dwelt beside,
A lover decked it for his gentle bride,
And all that wealth could purchase, taste prepare,
Or fancy whisper he had garnered there.
The song birds flitted in and out my leaves
Or sang their morning hymns upon the eaves,
The garden bloomed with all the rarest flowers,

And tinkling fountains chimed away the hours ;
 And when the glowing sun had sunk to rest,
 And the pale moon displayed her silver crest,
 The sweet perfume of distant orange grove
 Stole o'er the senses like a dream of love.
 Within this Eden dwelt the youthful pair,
 Nor let a shade of coming grief or care
 Bedim their sunshine, till one fatal day
 A clarion-blast drove all their bliss away,
 'T was the shrill note of fierce, invading war
 Resounding near and nearer from afar.

* * * * *

The husband girt him swiftly for the fight,
 Unheeding loving arms that clasped him tight :
 " My gentle bride ! I long, but can not stay,
 Each heart, each hand our country needs to-day ;
 But give in memory of home and thee
 One blossom from our dear magnolia tree,
 And I will wear it on my constant breast,
 My shield in battle, my delight in rest."
 'T was given, and they parted : where
 To meet ? and echo answered—" Where ?"

* * * * *

But still time passed. Where dying and the dead
 Lay stretched alike upon one lowly bed,
 A brave young soldier bent above a form
 Prostrate and riddled with the battle storm.

“ Yes! I am dying. Well I know my life
Ebbs in this crimson tide. My wife! my wife!
I go! but, friend, when I am laid to rest
Remove this withered blossom from my breast;
Tell her I sent it with my parting sigh,
The token of a love that can not die!”
And could a flower a higher mission know,
Link to the heaven above from earth below,
Binding two hearts in love’s electric chain
Till death that severed make them one again?

FLORA. Loving, in truth, the deeds that ’round you
cling,
But other flow’rets must their tribute bring.

SUNBEAMS AND ZEPHYRS. We are gay! we are gay!
Grave and still we can not stay;
Ere the flow’rets speak again,
Let us sing one merry strain.

FLORA. Sing, happy Sunbeams and Zephyrs! we’d be
Dreary, indeed, if deserted by ye.

[*They sing, and when the song is ended the GERANIUM speaks.*]

GERANIUM. That joyous melody might well inspire
E’en a Geranium with poetic fire;
And while its echoes linger in mine ear,
My travels and my mission you shall hear:
When from these quiet haunts I wandering strayed,
I took my course where echoing song birds made

The air alive with music: overhead
The blue sky hung, in azure glory spread,
And myriad sunbeams from their radiant height
Poured down a flood of mellow, golden light:
Onward I passed until no more I heard
The distant warbling of the woodland bird;
Onward, still on, till e'en the sunbeams fled,
And now no more their warmth and beauty shed,
Till, where a city sent her lights afar,
I entered just as evening lit her star.
Here devious pathways met my anxious gaze,
I paused reluctant still to tempt the maze.
Some, dim and squalid, passed before the door
Where dwelt, or rather hid, the lowly poor;
Some, bright as day, beneath the street-lamp's glare,
Whose very stones betokened taste and care,
Led to the homes of wealth, the halls of state,
The envied mansions of the rich and great.
Quickly I shunned the dark, forbidding street,
And to the brilliant highways turned my feet.
Light flashed from windows draped with rarest lace
And, shedding magic o'er the time and place,
The strains of music and the breath of flowers
Stole on the air from these enchanted bowers;
Here would I dwell, 'mid splendor rich and rare,
And passed within the noblest mansion there,
And from my sister blossoms claimed a place

To shed my fragrance and display my grace.
Ere long a form whose loveliness did gleam
As some bright vision of a fairy dream,
Passed like a ray of light along our bower,
Gazing with tender pride on each fair flower.
"Where all are beautiful 't is hard to choose.
My buds! which shall I pluck and which refuse?"
Pausing awhile her bright eyes chanced to rest
Where spread my perfume, reared my scarlet crest,
"Ah! sweet Geranium, beauty of the night,
Stealing the senses ere you meet the sight,
Your perfumed leaves upon my breast I'll wear,
Your scarlet blossoms in my raven hair."
She plucked—but when that night she went to rest
My perfumed leaves were missing from her breast,
My scarlet blossoms from her regal head:—
Mayhap they bloomed upon her cheek instead,
Mayhap she only gave them in exchange
For something dearer. It was very strange:
I know that night they pressed a manly heart,
And manly lips declared no gem of art,
No orient pearl, no diamond could compare
With those bright blossoms from her raven hair.
Thus e'en the noblest do my charms confess,
And beauty culled me to adorn and bless.

GARDNER. Ah! my Geranium, know you not that
worth

Dwells rather with the lowly ones of earth ;
Not with the rich and great your Savior stood,
And not for them *alone* he shed his blood.

FLORA. The beauty of your mission we confess,
And own 't is sweet two loving hearts to bless ;
But look we still for deeds of nobler fame.
Japonica! you have not urged your claim.

JAPONICA. Such varied scenes my sisters have portrayed

That I, mayhap, should shrink and be afraid
To tell my travels, lest perchance I seem
To catch some reflex of *their* spirit beam.
But though we met among the busy throng,
Together passed the sunny ways along,
Or sometimes lingered in some witching place
And blent our native elements of grace,
Yet still, methinks, on our eventful days
Life turned to each a new and different phase.
I too betook me to that fairy bower
The Rose has pictured with such magic power,
And the rash hand that plucked her beauties first
Left mine in that charmed spot to swell and burst.
My snowy petals one by one unfurled
Their waxen glories to the floral world,
And when a sister blossom said, "How fair!"
I bowed, nor longed for any praise more rare ;
But yet it could not be I thus should hide

My charms forever—I, the greenhouse pride!
And so one morning with a throb of pain
These shades I left to come not back again.
One perfect blossom crowned a rare bouquet
Of spotless rosebuds, pure and fair as they.
One, still more lovely, in a crystal vase
Reposed in unappropriated grace.
Fond hands had culled us with a tender pride,
The fair adornments of a fairer bride.
The evening came—it was the promised hour;
The young bride knelt within her maiden bower,
Low bent her gentle head in humble prayer,
And viewless pinions stirred the silent air.
Rising, she stood as dreamed we angels stand
In stainless glory at their King's right hand.
Gossamer robes which silver beams had kissed
Floated around her like a shining mist,
And the rich veil of dainty, fairy lace
Softened the beauties of her lovely face.
The fair bouquet her slender fingers pressed;
My snowy blossom wore she on her breast,
And poet never dreamed a dream more fair,
More pure, more holy than this vision rare.
Thus thought the bridegroom as he turned to claim
Her hand and call her by the dearest name
God gives to woman, "Wife! beloved wife!"
The treasured blessing of his coming life.

To be the pledge of faith and love like this,
The witness of such pure and holy bliss,
Oh tell me, pray, was not my mission blest
Above, Queen Flora, far above the rest?

FLORA. Sure God has led you all by pleasant ways,
And shed His blessing on your wandering days;
But, shrinking Violet, you must not hide
Your chance adventures. Speak, ere we decide.

VIOLET. Nay, honored Queen, I claim no right to
wear

The crown so fitting for my sisters fair.
Their faultless charms would grace a regal bower,
While I am but a lowly, humble flower—
Content, 't is true, my chosen place to fill,
And happy if I may but do your will;
But, since you kindly bid me speak to-day
My simple tale, I listen and obey.
My varied wanderings did not lead me where
The rich have reared their palaces so fair.
Ah! not for me the mighty and the great;
I would but shame their splendor, mock their state.
I took me down a narrow, humble street,
And stood awhile to mark the busy feet
That ceaseless passed before me to and fro,
And wondered whence they came, where they might go.
At length a woman, with that saddened mien
Which 'mong earth's favored ones is rarely seen,

Approached, and there was clinging to her side
A little one to whom God had denied
The joys of childhood, for a tiny crutch
I saw the slender, meager fingers clutch.
The woman's garments were all thin and bare,
And threads of silver dimmed her shining hair,
And brimming o'er with sorrow's bitter tide
The look she gave the cripple at her side.
They nearer drew, and with a childish glee
That little one, so frail and sad to see,
Exclaimed, "The flowers! please stop, mamma; oh
please ;

I never saw such violets as these!"
And then she bent her pallid little face,
So full of suffering, unconscious grace,
Above me, till her clustering curls of gold
Half nestled in my bosom's inmost fold.
"How sweet!" at last she murmured with a sigh;
"Oh! if these precious flowers were always nigh,
I'm sure I'd never pine or grieve again
When Jesus lays me on a bed of pain.
But do not sigh, mamma; I know that we
Are poor, so poor that all this may not be.
I'll only say, 'Good-bye, my precious flowers;
You could not blossom in a home like ours.'"
Checking a tear, she slowly turned away.
"Oh stay!" I cried, "dear little maiden, stay!

Your humble home is good enough for me ;
To soothe your sorrows shall my mission be.”
And so I tried their attic room to grace,
And shed my sweetest perfume o’er the place,
Until I learned to look with tender love
Upon that gentle, suffering little dove.
Dear, patient child, we little, little knew
How every day she near and nearer drew
The golden bridge, where e’en now angel feet
Came slowly down her failing steps to meet ;
Until one balmy morn we silent pressed
The slender hands above a pulseless breast
Whence the pure spirit had forever flown,
And felt that we were left alone, alone !
Where she had entered sorrow might not come ;
We knew the angels had but called her home.
Faithful in death, my sweetest blooms I shed
Upon her pillow, on her golden head,
And bade the mother look beyond the tomb,
Where flow’rs, celestial flow’rs, perennial bloom !
And thus, Queen Flora, I can claim no share
In the high honors of my sisters fair ;
In humble hearths and homes I have but striven
To use the gifts a gracious God had given.

FLORA. Enough, ye Zephyrs, Sunbeams, sister flowers,
Confess. Can e’en the noblest deeds of ours,
In heav’nly worth and excellence compare
With the blest mission of the Violet fair ?

ZEPHYRS AND SUNBEAMS. Bless her name, bless her
name;

Gentle Violet, we proclaim
Thee our Queen, Queen of Flowers;
Take the chaplet that was ours.

ROSE. Sister, I greet you, blushing for my pride.

LAUREL. And I; your modest worth you can not
hide.

MAGNOLIA. I too would bring my tribute to your
shrine.

GERANIUM. And let me, lowly sister, offer mine.

JAPONICA. I come the last, but not, I hope, the
worst;

For see we not how shall "the *last* be *first*"?

GARDENER. Go, lovely blossom; Flora waits to
crown

The modest head you bend so lowly down.

FLORA. Approach, fair Violet; you well may claim
This crown—no symbol of an empty name.

It is the pledge of homage, deep and true,
To unpretending virtue and to you.

Receive it then.

[*Crowns her.*

Let wood and hill and dale

Awake their echoes while we give you "Hail!"

[*They sing and then advance to the front of the stage, VIOLET in the center, the GARDENER, FLORA, and the FLOWERS on either side, and the SUNBEAMS and ZEPHYRS in the back-ground.*]



MERRY CHRISTMAS.



CHARACTERS.

WINTER,
CHRISTMAS,

SNOW SPIRIT,
JACK FROST.



MERRY CHRISTMAS.

SCENE — *Winter's Palace.*

WINTER. Hail, friends! here before you, chill Winter,
we stand;

Won't you give us a welcome, a shake of the hand?
Although much we fear, we must own it is true
That we bring in our train *lots* of evils to you:
To the children, instead of June's soft, balmy breezes,
Aching fingers and toes, and *such* coughs and such sneezes.
To the old folks rheumatics and pains without number,
That rob day of peace and the night of its slumber.
Yet though not for us summer roses may be,
That we have our charms, sure you all must agree;
For we sparkle and glisten and dazzle with gems
That rival the fairest of earth's diadems,
And the artist that fashions our jewels so bright,
With fingers so deft, is a mischievous sprite
Full of pranks and of tricks; and we call him *Jack Frost*.
Ah! I see that you know him (*aside*) perhaps to your cost.

But list! is it not? Yes! 't is his step that we hear!
If we speak of old Satan his imps *will* appear!

[*Enter JACK FROST, skipping and whistling.*]

Ah, ha, sir! Whence come you, our good *Master Jack*?
What fair wind has blown you so soon o'er our track?

JACK FROST. A north wind, if any. I come but to ask
How you're pleased with your jewels.

WINTER. Oh! perfect your task.
Don't you see how they sparkle and glisten and shine?
Ah! no other queen can boast jewels like mine.
But, you mischievous spirit, I fear that the sight
Won't pay for the fun you're missing to-night.

JACK FROST. Oh! I nipped a few noses and toes as I
passed,
And bursted some jars in a pantry locked fast,
And tripped a few people not sure of their legs—
Ah! (*laughing*) one was a boy well laden with eggs;
And I'd just started after a man with a tray,
When a fair spirit asked me to show her the way
To your Majesty's palace—

WINTER (*angrily*). And you left her to wait!
Do your pranks know no limit? Now take yourself straight,
And usher her in. [*Exit JACK.*]

WINTER. Oh! that terrible boy!
He'd make his grandmother a sport and a toy.
But (*listening*) they come! 'T is the Snow! and she carols
a song,

And scatters her flakes as she dances along !

[*Enter SNOW SPIRIT, dancing and singing.*]

WINTER. Let us hasten to greet you ! Too long did
you wait

Unnoticed alone at our closed palace gate.

But Jack for our pardon shall not beg in vain,
Since he's added such beauty and grace to our train.

SNOW SPIRIT. Thanks, gracious Winter. But I come
and go

Forever on your track. I am the Snow.

Silent and swift my feathery flakelets fall,

Weaving a charm, a mystic spell o'er all ;

Crowning with beauty housetop, tree, and spire,

Bearing my magic to the household fire,

Where young hearts beat and bright eyes brighter grow,

And shout a welcome to the merry Snow.

WINTER. Fair indeed is your mission, and the old
folks, no doubt,

Think of snows long ago, and re-echo the shout.

It is pleasant to feel, although youth can not last,

That the old in the young may live over the past.

JACK FROST. I wonder who lives his past over me !

My stars ! what a jolly old boy he'd be !

SNOW SPIRIT. As yet unnamed, a charm have I to
boast—

The one of all my gifts I prize the most :

I am the harbinger of Christmas ! White

MERRY CHRISTMAS.

Was the still earth upon that wondrous night
In ages past when stars sang in the morn,
And angel choirs proclaimed that Christ was born.
And now, when first o'er hill and wood and vale
My mantle falls, all tongues repeat the tale
Of Bethlehem, and children far and near
Cry out, "The snow! Christmas will soon be here!"

JACK FROST. That's so! you've a charm, certain sure,
Madam Snow.

But hurry Chris, won't you? He's awfully slow!

WINTER. Jack, where are your manners? Does the
heart in your breast

Beat responsive to nothing that is not a jest!

[Turning to the SNOW SPIRIT.

Fairy Snow, rare indeed is the charm that you claim,
And ever most welcome it renders your name;
For of all that God sent us to make this world fair,
Naught can with the bright spirit Christmas compare.

SNOW SPIRIT. But list! what sounds are these that
greet my ear?

A Christmas anthem, and it draweth near!

[Singing is heard in the distance, and as the last notes die
away CHRISTMAS enters.

CHRISTMAS. I, Christmas, come to greet you, friends,
with song;

For songs to me of right divine belong,
Since on the midnight air, all hushed and still,

Rang out the anthem, "Peace on earth, good will
To man, and glory up on high,"
Whence God looks on us with a father's eye.
This radiant star upon my brow
In pure resplendence glistens even now
As when in ages past it silent kept
Its vigil where the Godlike Infant slept,
And at my coming many a heart in prayer
Is bowed as bent the kneeling angels there.
The gay and careless to the crib I lead
To learn to love and pity those who need ;
The poor and grief-worn lead I also there
To show them how their many woes to bear ;
The meek and lowly and the pure of heart,
That Jesus may his sweets to them impart ;
And to the little ones "He bade to come"
I bring His blessing in their happy home,
Fill it with sunshine, rear the mystic tree,
Laden with wondrous fruit most fair to see.
Old Santa Claus prime minister I make ;
And he grows young each year for childhood's sake,
Calls up his ponies, harnesses his sleigh,
And down the chimney dashes then away.
Into each tiny bed he takes a peep,
And, sure each little one is fast asleep,
Goes to the stockings hanging by the fire
And drops in each the owner's heart's desire.

Then from his pockets, stuffed with dishes, dolls,
And guns and trumpets, drums, and blocks and balls,
Books, swords and pistols, horses, whistles, dogs,
And arks with every thing from bears to frogs,
He swift prepares—a jolly workman he—
To hang his treasures on the shining tree.
Then pulling on his skull-cap once again,
And whistling softly to his pony train,
He's off at once, to come no more, I fear,
Till Christmas brings him back another year.

JACK FROST. We'll be gay and full of good cheer,
For Christmas comes but once a year.

WINTER. Once a year; that is true. Then let no one
be sad.
Let us laugh, dance, and play, and be merry and glad;
Throw care to the winds. Smiling faces, good cheer,
Should welcome fair Christmas, that comes once a year.

SNOW SPIRIT. But, beautiful Spirit, you came with a
song,
And music and mirth to each other belong.
If you call up the jubilant echoes again,
Our hearts and our voices may join the strain.

CHRISTMAS. To hear is to obey. I'll gladly sing.
Come, let us make the very walls to ring;
While at my signal shall be drawn aside
The veil from eager eyes has served to hide

Our dazzling tree. Loud let our voices ring:

All hail! all hail! we sing, we sing, we sing!

[*They sing, and meanwhile CHRISTMAS wares her hand and the tree is unveiled.*]

WINTER (*turning to behold it, exclaims*): What beauteous vision greets my wondering eyes!

SNOW SPIRIT. Even the snow warms with the glad surprise!

JACK FROST. Hurrah for Santa Claus, that jolly boy!

CHRISTMAS. Brings one and all a Christmas full of joy!

SNOW SPIRIT. Then let us wish to every one that's dear

CHRISTMAS. A merry Christmas and a glad New Year!

(*Curtain drops.*)







FINIS.

IN this book I have garnered here
These fragments some perchance may prize,
The scattered waifs of many a year
That far, aye far, behind me lies.

Life's early dreaming time hath poured
Its glowing visions o'er the page,
And further on the thoughts are stored,
More chastened, of a riper age.

No stirring themes, no measure bold
Perchance may claim with these a place,
Nor heaven-born genius speechless hold
You spell-bound with its nameless grace.

These lines are simply echoes caught
Unstudied from my life's refrain:
To you, to me, with meaning fraught,
To others but an idle strain.

And yet, when looking o'er one day
Each rudely penciled sketch, it seemed
I heard a voice, low whispering say :
“These are the dreams that you have dreamed—

“The silent Echoes of the Past,
The inmost breathings of your soul,
And Time is bearing you so fast
On where the deep, dark waters roll,

“Then gather them while yet you may,
Though fragments, let them not be lost,
Your child will deem each careless lay
A gem beyond all earthly cost.”

As yet Life's *upward* slope has been
Spread out before me, green and wide ;
But soon I'll reach the top, and then
I fain must take the *downward* side.

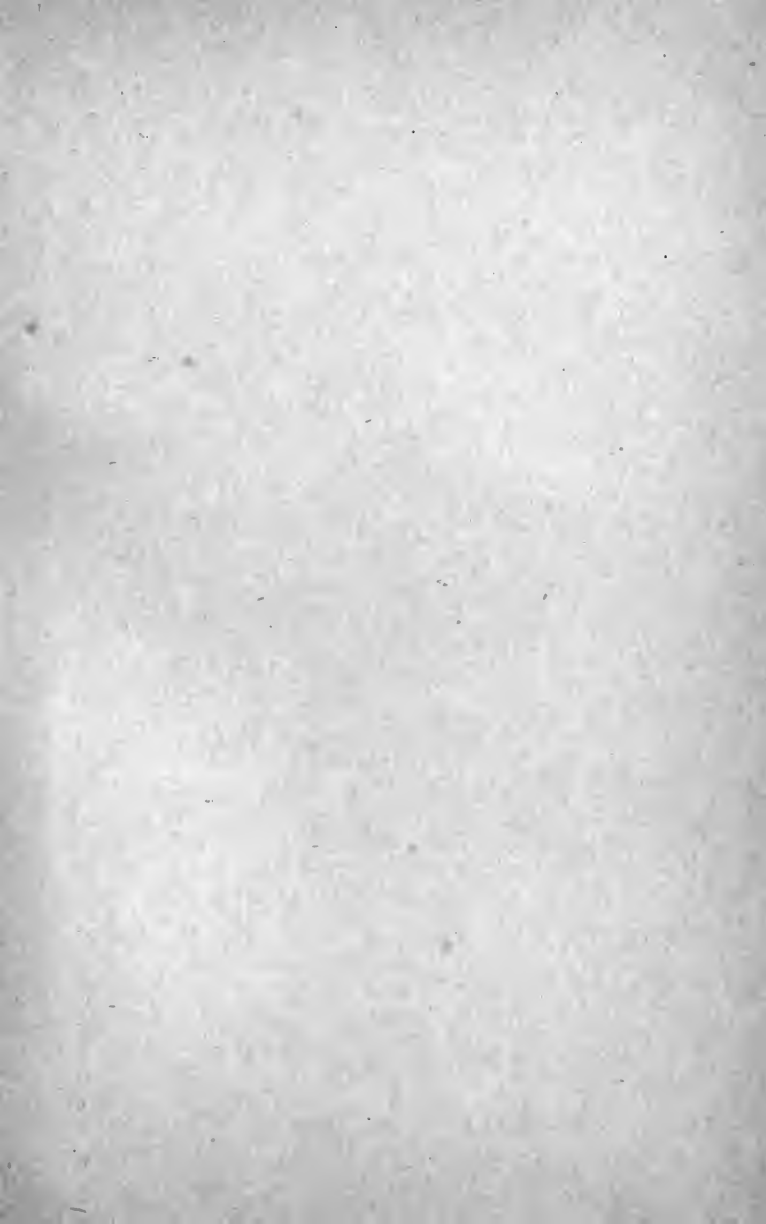
And when at last I've crossed the stream
Whose waters lave the other shore,
These snatches of Life's poet dream
Shall speak to you of me once more.



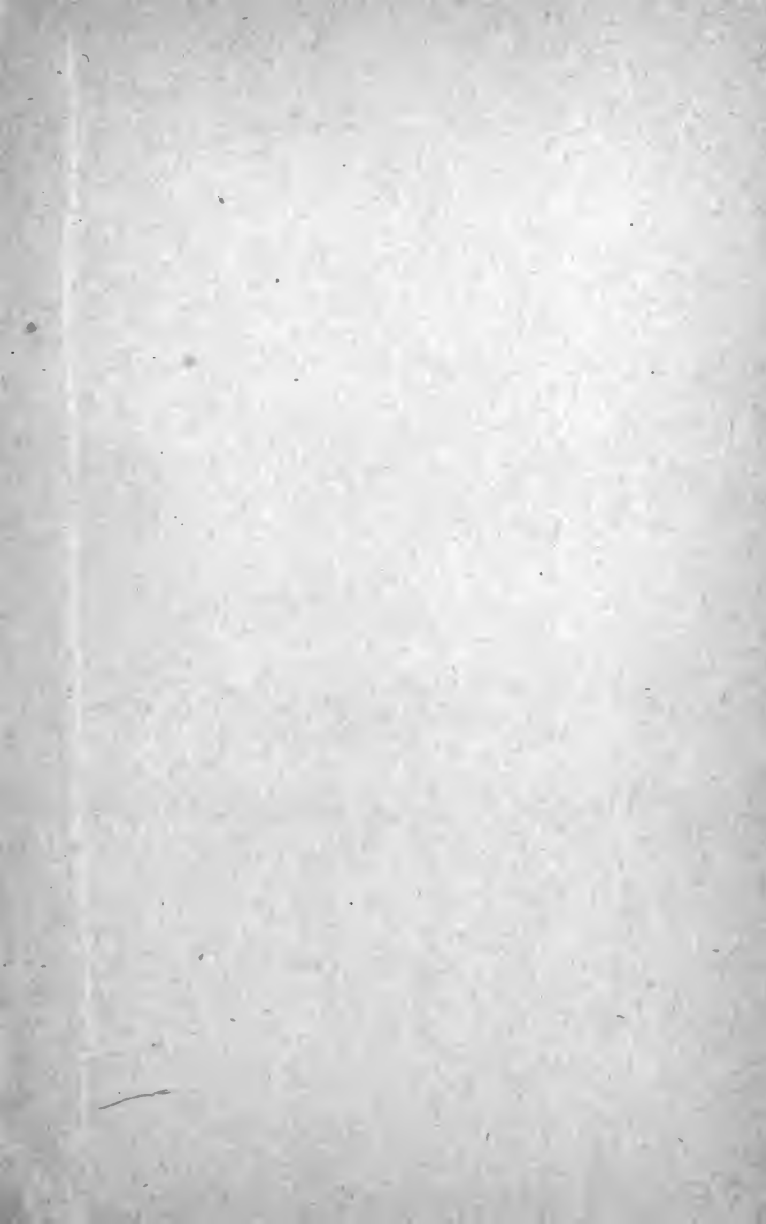












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